

THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT'S AMBITIONS REPRESENTED IN THEIR NUCLEAR
WEAPONS PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON SECURITY
IN THE ARAB GULF REGION

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Strategy

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2012-01

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 08-06-2011		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2011 – JUN 2012	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Iranian Government's Ambitions Represented in their Nuclear Weapons Program and its impact on Security in the Arab Gulf Region				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Major Feisal Abukshiem				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT In the past decade, it has become apparent that the Iranian Government is not willing to give up its Nuclear Fuel Program. Though it claims that its endeavors are merely the pursuit of making nuclear fuel, the threat of an unsupervised Iranian Nuclear Program brings great worry to the security of other Arab States in the Region. In a larger context, as the Iranian Nuclear Program grows, how does it impact the International Security Environment and what responses will it bring from other key actors (NATO, the EU, and the US)? This thesis will examine various aspects of the Iranian Government's Nuclear Program. It will measure the political and economic impacts of the Iranian Nuclear Program, and the security impacts on other states in the Arab Gulf Region and the global energy. Finally, this thesis will explore possible Iranian nuclear ambitions and the implications of these ambitions on the International Security Environment.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Iran motivations, Iran ambitions, Iran threats, impact on the International Security Environment, Iran nuclear weapons, Arab Gulf instability stability and global energy security, key actor responses					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	158	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT'S AMBITIONS REPRESENTED IN THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON SECURITY IN THE ARAB GULF REGION, by Major Feisal Abukshiem, 158 pages.

In the past decade, it has become apparent that the Iranian Government is not willing to give up its Nuclear Fuel Program. Though it claims that its endeavors are merely the pursuit of making nuclear fuel, the threat of an unsupervised Iranian Nuclear Program brings great worry to the security of other Arab States in the Region. In a larger context, as the Iranian Nuclear Program grows, how does it impact the International Security Environment and what responses will it bring from other key actors (NATO, the EU, and the US)?

This thesis will examine various aspects of the Iranian Government's Nuclear Program. It will measure the political and economic impacts of the Iranian Nuclear Program, and the security impacts on other states in the Arab Gulf Region and the global energy. Finally, this thesis will explore possible Iranian nuclear ambitions and the implications of these ambitions on the International Security Environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A variety of people have assisted with this paper. They have supported, reviewed, commented, and criticized it. I want to acknowledge the Saudi National Guard for choosing me to attend the Command and General Staff College. I also want to acknowledge the college for providing a positive learning environment. I owe exceptional thanks to my committee members Dr. Timothy Hentschel, Mr. Jeff Oeser, and Mr. Peter Scheffer. Dr. Hentschel provided his perspective and insightful comments on this paper. Mr. Oeser was my Small Group Advisor. He assisted me with the Masters of Military Arts and Science work in addition to my academic classes. I appreciate his support and patience.

I am also thankful to my American and Saudi friends and colleagues for their views and support. This is especially true for COL Saleh Alharbi (SANG) and COL(R) Michael Martinez. I sincerely thank Mr. James Fain, Chief of IMSD, and his wife (Angela) for their support to me and my family during my time at the college. Their help was particularly appreciated when my wife had our baby, Meelaf. I want to thank my wife for her personal understanding and support. She watched after our children, and she gave me the ability to conduct this research and complete this writing.

Most importantly, I want to thank Mr. Scheffer, my thesis Chairman. His encouragement, patience and insights were invaluable to completing this paper. He helped to shape my thoughts through guidance and careful reviews. Mr. Scheffer, please accept my appreciation and thanks.

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ACRONYMS

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
EU	European Union
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US	United States

ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Arab Gulf¹ security has crucial importance not only for the Gulf States, but also for the Middle East countries because of the connections between ethnic, religious, economic, and diplomatic relations. It is also of vital importance to the interests and national security of the world superpowers in west and in the east. Further, the Gulf region finds itself suffering in large part because of its military security and political threats, and because of the conflicts which exist between its current defense apparatus and its protection options. Meanwhile, the world's major superpowers pursue their ambitions in and around the region.

For the foreseeable future, the main threat to Arab Gulf security is Iran's weapons programs which consist of conventional weapons and-or the development of nuclear weapons. However, the Iranian government insists that it practices a defensive military strategy designed to prevent United States (US) efforts to enclose the Iranian economy and suppress its revolutionary expansion. Still, to this end, these measures were taken by Iran in order to enhance its security, which in turn has generated much insecurity among the surrounding countries. Consequently, all countries in the region live in a continuous military imbalance created by Iranian fears, tendencies, and ambitions. There is much study that must be done to examine the major causes of Iran's actions to the point of possibly reformulating the security strategies with the region.

¹Named (the Arab gulf) from the Arabs and Islamic countries and also in older and/or historical maps also widely known as the Persian Gulf.

Iran (the principal actor in the study) has acquired historical and strategic importance throughout its history as one of the major powers in the Middle East and central Asia. Known as the homeland of the Persians, Carel Landsberg in his remarkable work said “traditionally *iranshaher*, as Iran is described in Islamic sources, referred to a geographic land area and not to national identity. The term Iran thus initially lacked political content and was not intended to have any, it only gradually gained political substance under the rule of Savavid . . . and culminated in 1930 under the Pahlavi dynasty when Iran become the official name of a country.”² It geographically borders seven different states and three bodies of water. Historically, Iran has developed the tendency to become enemies with neighboring nations; beginning in the days of the Roman Empire and continuing until today. It is noticeable to the follower of Persian history that Iranians seem to be fighting their political and military battles with one style, and end their battles on a similar pace and with similar style. The clear evidence for that is the Iranian’s Presidents speeches at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly as usual every year, delivers strongly worded anti-Western tirade, “As he has in previous years, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad questioned the Holocaust and said "arrogant powers" impose sanctions or threaten military action on those who question it.”³ There are various reasons for this; however, the most distinctive one is the notion by which Iranians seem

²Carel Martin Landsberg, “An Analysis of Iranian Negotiating Style as Evidenced from the 1979 US Hostage Crisis and the Iran- EU Nuclear Negotiations from 2003 to 2006” (Masters, University of Pretoria, June 2009).

³PBS Newshour, “Diplomats Walk Out as Ahmadinejad Addresses U.S. General Assembly, 22 September 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/09/watch-live-ahmadinejad-addresses-un-general-assembly.html> (accessed 18 May 2012).

to believe that they live in a closed box that must be broken, as they consider this box to be problematic. During the last century, the Persians were fighting against the Ottoman Empire, Afghans, British Russians and Arabs. Dr. Thierry Coville⁴ said in his book–Iran, invisible revolution “the Iranian nationalism has a long struggle with the invaders. Iran has not stopped the struggle with the great empires the world has seen through the history.” Afterwards, Iran began experiencing a civil conflict within its own borders. Even after the Iranian Revolution (1979), the future enemy was created through the hostage crisis with the US. Khomeini created the enemies for himself and the Shia to hang his political mistakes on this enemy, because he considers himself an Islamic religious leader trying to save Islam from the enemies “Ayatollah Rohllah Khomeini, did not see himself as simply a head of state but the leader of the entire community of believers, this was to be a revolution without of borders.”⁵

Geographical and historical data shows that Iran cannot live without an enemy and requires a strong arbitrary government in large part because of the diverse ethnic groups that exist inside that box; the Arabs, Kurds, Baluchis, Azeris, and the Turks.⁶ Jameel Al Theyabi, (Managing Editor, Al Hayat Newspaper-London) said “throughout history, the Iranian governments are based on oppression and tyranny, to strengthen their control . . . and these kinds of government continued until the fall of the Pahlavi family.”⁷

⁴French Ph.D. researcher at IRIS, an expert on Iran.

⁵Ray Takyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (Times Books, 2006).

⁶CNN Report 10/07/09 (in Arabic).

⁷Jameel Al Theyabi, *Iran and the Dance of Cancer* (Obecan: 2011. ISBN 978-603-503-138-77).

Beyond the power struggle between conservatives and reformers, economic pressures, and inaction at the top of the political pyramid in Iran, the Iranian government is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons as a means of deterring its modern day enemies. Hence, it is imperative to study and analyze actors, internal and external policies, and influences of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The tendencies and strategic goals that Iran exhibits today show the extent of the concern of the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the Arab countries toward security threats similar to those which accompanied the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s and the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. Through its expansionist policies, such as the occupation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) islands, the Iranian government continues to add fuel to the fires of mistrust among its Regional neighbors. Furthermore, its support to Lebanese (Hezbollah) and groups opposed to the Arab-Israeli peace process and the Shia in Iraq and Bahrain is an attempt to rearrange the demographic balance in the Middle East. As Ray Takeyh⁸ said in his work the Hidden Iran, “Khomeini reemerged as the leader of a populist revolution and an Islamic Republic that pledged to remake the entire region into its image.”⁹

As the Iranian government pursues its nuclear ambitions, Arab states as well as non-Arab states become wary of the implications of yet another international conflict in the Gulf; one that would have dire environmental impacts that would be felt around the globe, The US led invasion of Iraq in 2003 has resulted in geopolitical instability in the region and led to the increasing audacity of Tehran’s attempts to destabilize its neighbors

⁸Ray Takeyh, PhD is an Iranian-American Middle East scholar, former United States Department of State official, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University. Wikipedia.

⁹Takyh, *Hidden Iran*.

and encourage terrorism both within and beyond the region. In a *Stratfor Global Intelligence* report “Iran is an emerging power seeking to exploit the vacuum created by the departure of US troops from Iraq. Tehran also plays a major role along its eastern border, to facilitate a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.”¹⁰ The sharp contrasts in ideologies and interests between Iran and the US (and those Gulf states whose interests are aligned with those of the US) could have negative outcomes on the security and stability in the region. This is especially true since Iran has refused to respond to the UN Security Council and inspectors of the International Energy Agency (IAEA).¹¹ In the Congressional Research Service report for the Congress “the UN Security Council has responded to Iran’s refusal to suspend work on its uranium enrichment and heavy-water nuclear reactor programs by adopting several resolutions which imposed sanction on Tehran.”¹² The current conflict has its roots in the history and ideology of both sides (Arabs and Persians) which has been overlooked by most of the observers. In line with this notion, Thierry Coville, says “In fact, the Iranian political system is established based on the following pillars-the Shī’ism, Persian nationalism and Marxism.”¹³ Of course, all of these pillars in Iran are different from its neighboring countries.

¹⁰Kamran Bokhari, “Geopolitical Journey: Iran at a Crossroads,” *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, September 27, 2011, <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110926-geopolitical-journey-iran-crossroads> (accessed 18 May 2012).

¹¹Alrfa’ay Abuzahar Rana, *The Iranian Nuclear Profile and the Clash in Middle East* (Beirut Lebanon: Dar Al Uloom Al arabaih, 2008).

¹²Pual K. Kerr, *Iran’s Nuclear Program Status* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 29 December 2009), http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL34544_20080623.pdf (accessed 18 May 2012).

¹³Thierry Coville, *Iran, Invisible Revolution* (Beirut Lebanon: Dar Al-Farabi, 2008).

Primary Research Question

What are the motivations behind the Iranian nuclear program and how does it threaten the security and stability of the Arab Gulf Region?

Secondary Research Question

In order to address the primary research question, the following secondary questions must be answered:

1. What are the roots of Iran motivation to acquire the nuclear weapons?
2. Does the Iranian Government have threatening ambitions represented in their Nuclear Program?
3. Does it impact the International Security Environment (economically or militarily)?
4. Is Iran nuclear energy program designed to support nuclear weapons?
5. How would the Arab Gulf instability affect the stability of global energy security?
6. Will other key actors respond to this threat?

Assumptions

The real challenges facing the Gulf Cooperation Council States are, directly at the geostrategic and demographic levels, also security and economic challenges threatening the Gulf States directly, as well as threatening global stability which based on the energy security and stability. Indeed, the majority of the oil fields in the gulf are located within a hundred mile radius of Iranian nuclear facilities. The main assumption that is made in this research is that Arabian Gulf security is comprised of an overlap of several states'

national, regional and international interests. These interests are completely connected to international energy security, to waterways providing access to those sources of energy, and to the interests that virtually all states have in access to those resources.

Definition of Terms

Ahmadinejad, President Mahmoud: The current president of Iran elected in June 2005 and reelected on 2009; he has a close link to the Ulama (clergy). He is the first non-clerical president, and he is also a leader of coalition of conservative political groups.

Al Quds force: Special operation force-brigade size of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

ayat allah: Sign of good.

Basiji: Revolutionary militia; a mobilized force which partly works under the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Bazaar: refers to the Market; it is the core of Iranian economic life, and also a key to the Iranian's political history where individuals and-or families are important supporters; thus delineating a linkage between religion, politics and money.

GCCS: The Gulf Cooperation Council States.¹⁴

Gulf States: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and Oman.¹⁵

Hidden Imam—also known as al-Mahdi: refers to the infant son of the 11th Imam of the Twelver Shia who went into “occultation” in the Ninth century. It is prophesied that he would come (at the end of the time) to fill the earth with justice as it was filled

¹⁴The Gulf Cooperation Council States Secretariat General, <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/index.html> (accessed 3 April 2012).

¹⁵Ibid.

with injustice and oppression, al-mahdi is the Shia messiah. The Arab Shia schools did not consider *Wilayat al Faqih* before the Iranian scholars took control of the Shia schools.

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency.¹⁶

Imam: spiritual leader to lead the Shia in both religious and political.

IRGC: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, also known Pasdaran.¹⁷

Ithnā'ashari'ism: Twelver, majority of the Shiism (Iran leaders and who follow them), they believe in *Wilayat al Faqih* and the return of the hidden imam (mentioned above) which is the twelfth imam, the other sect of Shias have different beliefs.

Khāmene'I, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali: The current Iranian supreme (spiritual) leader, served as the President in 1981. He is the highest Shia religious authority in Iran and the most Islamic world, and is known in Iran as “guardian of the Muslims.”

Khātāmī: President Mohammad: Served as the fifth President of Iran for two terms, and is seen as a reformer, scholar, and a philosopher with a liberal view. He is currently on of the leader of the green movement.

Khod'eh - Taqiyya: (The deception tactic), is also part of the Ithnā'ashari'ism faith as it is a religious principle. It means tricking one's enemy in order to take advantage of him. (Or double-dealing). One of their strategies of dealing with non-Shiism, especially in their nuclear negotiations.¹⁸

¹⁶International Atomic Energy Agency, “Country Analysis Brief,” <http://www.eia.gov/cabs/Iran/pdf.pdf>. (accessed 3 April 2012).

¹⁷Landsberg, “An Analysis of Iranian Negotiating Style.”

¹⁸Definitions from (8-23) are from the same source (19), with a simple modification to shorten the definitions.

Khomeini Ayatollah Ruhollah: (In power 1979 to 1989) Iranian cleric, political and philosopher. The Iranian supreme (spiritual) leader; the spiritual father of the Shias in Iran and abroad and the Iranian ideological leader of the 1979 revolution which overthrew the Shah. He is the maker of the current religious-political system in Iran.

Middle East: Sources differ in defining the countries of the Middle East, but in this thesis, it is intended to be the following countries: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, and Kuwait).¹⁹

Rafsanjani, Ayatollah, President Hashemi: The fourth President of Iran; served for two terms (1989 to 1997, scholar, pragmatic conservative, and the second most powerful men after Khamenei in Iran, “Rafsanjani is the man who frightens Khamenei.”²⁰ He is the main supporter of the opposition and reformists in Iran, and is also one of the richest bazaaris in Iran. He favors good relation with the Arab states and the West, but he is strongly supporting the nuclear program and some have said that he is the founder of it.

The Arab Gulf: This will be used throughout the thesis because the name is still debated, even though the name is linked to the Arab sense of Sumerian and ancient Semitic languages (Akkadian: Babylonian Assyrian).²¹

The Iranian Revolution: The revolution which broke out in 1979 and transformed Iran from a monarchy to an Islamic Republic by referendum. The Ayatollah (Ruhollah

¹⁹The Gulf Cooperation Council States Secretariat General.

²⁰Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=45&issueno=11805&article=614077> (accessed 2 May 2012).

²¹The Gulf Cooperation Council States Secretariat General.

Khomeini) is the founder of the "Islamic Republic of Iran," and attempted to export the revolution to neighboring areas.

The Iran-Iraq War: The first Gulf War broke out between the two countries (Iraq and Iran) from September 1980 to August 1988. One million people were killed and the financial losses incurred were over \$400 billion. The war affected the political equations for the Middle East and had a deep impact on the results that led to the second and third Gulf Wars.

UAE Islands: Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb. This is a group of the UAE's islands occupied by Iran in 1971 following the British withdrawal from the region. The islands are located south of the Arabian Gulf at the entrance to the Straits of Hormuz.²²

UN: United Nations.²³

Limitations-Scope

Because the thesis addresses two main topics (nuclear weapons and energy security), both of which are incredibly sensitive in nature, the researcher's analysis will be restricted to those areas of the nuclear program that are unclassified. Discussion of Iranian history, religious motivations and diplomatic relations with other states will be analyzed in ways that relate to the matter of its nuclear program. A brief examination of the rise of Iranian political opposition groups is a relatively new spectacle and the literature on the subject is still developing. Finally, the notion of Iran (and its nuclear

²²Ibid.

²³United Nations, www.un.org/en/ (accessed 3 April 2012).

program) as a rouge state and a sponsor of terrorism, makes this subject incredibly vital to security and stability the world over.

Delimitations

Research surrounding Iran is limitless and emphasis will be place on the political religious and military agenda at the strategic level dating back to the Iranian Revolution (1979) to present day with quick view of the historical aspects.

Significance

The Middle East, which is the center of conflicts throughout its history, still suffers from historical and religious issues which accumulated for thousands of years; some by internal factors and some brought on by superpowers pursuing their own interests. Despite the importance of all Middle East countries, the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the neighboring countries along the gulf banks captured the world attention because of the availability of oil. The new threats in the gulf region created by the internal ambitions of Iran (which disturbed the gulf balance), other players of Al Qaida, Mahdi militia, Bader militia, Hezbollah–Kuwait and Hezbollah- Saudi and outside forces as well, the Gulf Cooperation Council States has already endured several previous wars in less than 30 years. These wars were fought with conventional weapons and the results were disastrous. Nowadays, the Middle East is subject to renewed conflicts and wars can come about at any moment as a result of the Arab spring. Thus, if the Iranian efforts continue in pursuit of a nuclear weapons program, even though the claim of the Tehran government is that the program supports their economy, the likelihood of creating

a possible international crisis is very high and thus forms the basis of this study. From this premise, the researcher intends to show:

1. Sources of Iranian strength and weakness and how each should be addressed in order to achieve stability in the Arabian Gulf.
2. Iranian ambitions and their feelings toward security in the Gulf and toward the worlds' energy.
3. Highlights of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s vision, as well as Arab countries and the international community's efforts to confront the Iranian ambition at strategic level.
4. The roadmap to the end of the Iran's nuclear program.

Summary

The rise of nuclear programs in other Arab States and the arms race are clear measures of the Iranian nuclear threat. In addition, the concerns revolving around the Iranian nuclear program negatively impact the economies in the region vis-à-vis the decreasing amount of oil supplies from the regional countries, and volatile changes in crude oil prices as a result of a possible conflict in the region (world energy security). Iranian ambitions represented in the nuclear program will influence both national and international security in different ways and has already initiated a multi-strategic crisis.

This thesis will examine various aspects of the Iranian Government's Nuclear Program. It will measure the political and economic impacts of the Iranian Nuclear Program, and the security impacts on other states in the Arab Gulf Region. Finally, this thesis will explore possible Iranian nuclear ambitions and the implications of these

ambitions on the International Security Environment and recommend possible remedies to address the issues as hand while maintaining security and stability.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature analysis is to evaluate current works related to the thesis and identify those sources which are useful to the study. A significant number of papers, studies and books exist on the Gulf issues. The trends, interests and quality vary broadly, fluctuating from historical, political, economic and security in general overviews, to those more detailed in the study theme. Some of the older works, written before the Iraq war in 2003, seem to lack balance and focus in some areas such as Iranian political considerations during the 1979 revolution. These works enhanced the idea that the Iranian regime is consistent on all fronts which later appears as a false judgment; there are internal conflicts and revolutions (the green movement of the clergy as example). Some current works present a more objective clarification of Iranian past and more recent events. These works will be essential in supporting this research. The researcher has relied more on writers, researchers and other reporters who have studied the region and observed the day-to-day challenges of the Gulf region.

The researcher will organize the literature into seven distinct categories: (1) Western Research, (2) Arab Research, (3) Open Source Media Reports, (4) Reports of International Organizations, (5) Iranian Sources, (6) Web Sources and (7) Military Studies. The researcher's intent for categorizing the literature is to better illuminate multiple perspectives. Further, the nature of the topic of this study is dynamic and changing very quickly, making it difficult to study with any specific type of single source; it is broadly dependent on many sources as the issue itself is looked upon differently within each literature category. Additionally, the researcher will also review

historical references, religious texts, economic reports and military publications in order to follow the rapid developments in the current study.

Western Research

While there are many books written about Iran, most of the literature concerning its nuclear program is written by western researchers. The western sources are divided into two parts. The first part relies on individual reports and newspaper articles. Though these reports have different ideas and points of view, they still come from similar sources and contain similar errors that are often repeated. . . . Most, (if not all) of the research and studies seen in European and American Libraries reflect the western point of view; in large part because it has been prepared either by western researchers, or by those who carry western ideas and traits with the full intent of being able to successfully market their work. The second types of western sources have relied on field studies prepared jointly by western researchers along with other researchers from the Gulf Region, whether Arab or Persian. These studies (in general), contain more precise facts and a clearer view of the Gulf Region. Though they are better (in terms of accuracy) than the previous sub-category, they are still limited; however, all the studies written after the 2003 Iraq war are closer to the truth. Still, there are some contradictions.

The renowned International Security Environment theorist, Thomas P.M. Barnett, in one of his recent articles, explores the security implications of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. His insights went beyond just supporting Iran's right of obtaining nuclear fuel to supporting its right to obtain nuclear weapons. He wrote: "Iran's reach for the bomb may possibly be the best thing that's happened to the Middle East peace process in

decades.”²⁴ Though works like these are valuable in examining both sides of the subject, this view in particular exceeds the usual norms and is inconsistent with most other open source works and opinions. On the other hand, there are those like the Iranian-American, Dr. Ray Takyh, who see that Iranian nuclear efforts are dangerous to the world peace because “Iran is no longer a radical state seeking to upend the regional order in the name of Islamic legitimacy, but rather is yet another of Tehran’s penchant toward terrorism.”²⁵

From Europe, the French Ph.D. Thierry Coville, who once lived in Iran, and is now a researcher at the Institute of International and Strategic Relations, and an expert on Iran, said: “There has emerged, a whole series of those self-appointed experts on Iran. They do not speak the Persian language. Some did not go to Iran, and they also ignore any information that does not support them. History provides examples of the risks associated with the absence of a realistic analysis.”²⁶

The common theme in western research sources are the discussions of the Iranian nuclear program from a legal point of view. And ignore the program’s ties to religious and historical characteristics.

Arab Research

Arab public opinion is divided into three major groups. Each group aligns its ideas through articles of those with whom they think similarly.

²⁴Thomas P.M. Barnett, “Securing the Middle East with a Nuclear Iran? *The Globalist*, 24 January 2006, <http://www.theglobalist.com/storyid.aspx?StoryId=5076> (accessed 18 May 2012).

²⁵Takyh, *Hidden Iran*.

²⁶Coville, *Iran, Invisible Revolution*.

The first group consists of Shiite Arabs (of three subsets). The first subset believes that Iran has the full right to possess nuclear weapons. This group sees Iran as the mother country to all the Shia in the world and the only protector they have; this includes the Shiites in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, the Gulf States and other countries as well. Therefore, all of their articles and books reflect this point of view. A single visit to any Shiite library is convincing enough. In a work taken from a Hezbollah library a reference book on the political relations, Sheikh Nabil Qaouk, the Deputy Head of the Hezbollah's Executive Council wrote: "I salute the Islamic Republic of Iran and its people, highlighting its supportive role to the resistance, liberation." He also stressed that "all the plots woven against Iran are futile and will not deter it from confronting aggressions and supporting the resistance."²⁷ The second and third subsets are nationalist Shiites who prefer the interests of their own countries over the Iranian interests, and believe that a nuclear weapon will give Ayatollah Khamenei the power to control even the most prominent Shia opposition (Arab Shiites vs. Persian Shiites).

The second group is the Sunni Arabs, all of whom oppose Iran's nuclear program regardless of whether the program seeks a peaceful energy or ballistic capability. This group sees Iran's nuclear program as yet another reason such for resentment of the constant threats, terrorism, and destructive interference in Iraq, Lebanon, and most of the Arab countries. In his recent book *Nuclear Secrets*, Magdi Kamel (Egyptian) explores "an Iranian political succession used to utilize nuclear power as leverage to control its

²⁷Islamic Resistance in Lebanon–Hezbollah, <http://www.english.moqawama.org/index.php> (accessed 28 March 2012).

own people in order to face the threats of the Great Satan (the US) and its permanent enemy (Israel).”²⁸

Prince Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation of Saudi Arabia, in his written work entitled *The Gulf Security from a National Perspective*, said “Iran’s military is embracing the deterrence doctrine, seeking to achieve through the overwhelming superiority on neighboring countries. From this point, the Iranian leadership for a long time is working to implement a comprehensive program to rebuild its armed forces, especially in the Nuclear and chemical weapons.”²⁹ Bassam Al-Asali (Syrian), in his comprehensive work *The Military Challenges and the Arab Future*, describes Iran’s repeated demands over the last 30 years and wrote “Iran’s repeated demand to remove the foreign bases from the Arabian Gulf, it is the right request but for wrong purpose, this means from the perspective of Tehran, giving Iran the role of Gulf policeman.”³⁰

At the GCC National and Regional Security Conference held in the Bahraini capital of Manama in January 2012, the Chief of the Dubai Police Force, Lieutenant General Dhahi Khalfan, in his usual strong and true style, regarding the current events in the region, summarized in study that the internal and external threats facing GCC

²⁸Magdi Kamel, *The Nuclear Secrets* (Damascus, Cairo: Arab Book House, 2008).

²⁹Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR)—Abu Dhabi, 1997.

³⁰“The military challenges and the Arab Future,” *Khalid Military Academy Magazine*, <http://www.kkmaq.gov.sa/Detail.asp?InNewsItemID=273639> (accessed 1 May 2012).

countries as “that of Iraq’s subordination to Iran, which threatens the security of the Gulf and that Iran’s nuclear program, even if peacefully orientated, is also a threat.”³¹

The third group is Christian which, though of Arab ethnicity was influenced by and suffered most from Iranian policy interventions against their interests in both Lebanon and Iraq. Political Analyst Khairallah Khairallah (Lebanese), in his political analysis of the Arab situation after the Iraq War in 2003, and following the Iranian interference in Arab countries as sequence of that, said “it was known, at the moment that the Bush Administration decided to overthrow the Baathist regime in Iraq, that Iran would be the first winner in the American war, which was an active partner in it. There is supposed to be an Iranian official that has enough courage to demand the establishment of a huge statue of George W. Bush in Tehran.”³² Furthermore, his observations of the situation after the Arab Spring, which led to the deteriorating situation of religious minorities in Arab countries and the spread of sectarian violence, finds that there is a lot of blame being place on the Christians Arabs as a result of Middle Eastern governments being overthrown by the West. He claimed “Iraq and Lebanon, which are Iranian colonies; the efforts are continuing in Jordan and are headed toward the same situation in the future.”³³

There are some who embrace Iran and its nuclear program because they have been deeply disappointed with America’s commitment to Israel; accusing the West of

³¹Bahrain News Agency, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/news> (accessed 10 May 2012).

³²Elaph.com, “No military secrets,” <http://www.elaph.com/Web/opinion/2012/1/711397.html> (accessed 1 May 2012).

³³Ibid.

using a double standard because it does not talk about Israeli nuclear capability. Professor Shibley Telhami of the Brookings Institute contended that Arab opinion is “shifting toward a positive perception of Iran’s nuclear program, and asserts that Arab publics even have sanguine views about the consequences for the region if Iran was to develop a nuclear weapon.”³⁴ The researcher sees this percentage as still small, but it is growing faster, especially during the Arab Spring.

Open Source Media Reports

There are many media interviews, articles, and other journals which cover the recent development in world energy security in the Gulf as well as the other Gulf issues.

During a televised address to the UN, which was aired on CNN, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke to the UN General Assembly. As always, his answers were inconsistent with the visible facts seen by the world. In matter of hostility between US and Iran, Mr. Ahmadinejad said “the hostility has not been from our end . . . The hostility has been one- sided on the part of American politicians. And our nation has always defended itself against that hostility.”³⁵ Thus, Mr. Ahmadinejad neglected the fact that, according to semi-official sources, he was one of the Basij members who stormed the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and held US hostages; thus, he made Iran and enemy with the US and rid his country of Iranians who were educated in America.

³⁴“What Arabs Really Think About Iran,” *Foreign Policy*, 22 January 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/09/16/what_arabs_really_think_about_iran (accessed 27 March 2011).

³⁵Cable News Network (CNN), “Interview Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,” <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0809/23/lkl.01.html> (accessed 1 May 2012).

“We assisted in Iraq to establish safety and security, as well as a new government” he said, while all the political analysts at the strategic level agreed that, Iran is corrupting politics and security in Iraq, seeking to make Iraq under its control which the head of Al-Quds force General Qasim Sulaimani announced on January 2012 “that Iraq and South Lebanon are submissive to Tehran’s will.”³⁶

Mr. Ahmadinejad also said “The US government went and overthrew Saddam. Well, perhaps in the first instance, we might have been happy. But we realized that the US government is more interested in staying in Iraq and to dominate, through its presence in Iraq, the region.”³⁷ This is one of the most important strategic objectives, demanded by all successive Iranian governments since the 1979 Iranian Revolution; namely, to control the world’s energy resources in the Gulf, through the growth and employment of conventional military forces, and now through the threat posed by nuclear weapons in order to dominate the region.

In an interview with *Al-Jazeera* on 7 September 2009, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, “I think Iran has been a challenge for the United States and for the international community, for that matter, for 30 years. I think that a strong and democratic Iraq and particularly one with a multi-sectarian government becomes a barrier to Iranian influence, not a bridge for it.”³⁸ Iranians know that a strong Iraq is a threat to

³⁶“General Qasim Sulaimani, January 2012,” <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/19/189338.html> (accessed 9 May 2012).

³⁷Cable News Network, Interview Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

³⁸US Department of Defense, “Secretary Robert Gates Interview with Al Jazeera at the Pentagon,” 4 September 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4473> (accessed 27 March 2012).

their own security. As mentioned, Iran dreams of a divided and unstable Iraq with a government that is loyal to Tehran.

Secretary Gates went on to say, of the Iranian effort to achieve this dream, “everybody knows that there are Iraqi politicians in the Iraqi government who are very close to Iran.”³⁹

In an effort to counter the Iraq-Iran alliance, the Gulf States are strengthening its military purchases from the US and a new chapter of a conventional arms race is being led by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar. On this notion, Secretary Gates said “the more that our Arab friends and allies can strengthen their security capabilities, sends the signal to the Iranians that this path that they’re on is not going to advance Iranian security but in fact could weaken it.”⁴⁰

In a highly, classified meeting at Royal Air Force Base Molesworth in the United Kingdom, which, though planned as a secret forum, its dialogues were leaked to the public by the Guardian Newspaper. The meeting was attended by senior American and British military officials, joined by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intelligence members, and by Prince Turki al-Faisal, (former head of Saudi Intelligence, and a former ambassador to London and Washington). The meeting addressed the classified security issues and generated a publication entitled *A Saudi National Security Doctrine for the next decade, and the Arab Gulf Challenges*. Some of the issues contained in this publication were aimed at Iran. Others addressed the Arab Spring and how its resultant chaos provided opportunities to all kinds of groups deemed as enemies

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

or as extremist by the West. Still too, the notion of maintaining good relations with the West and the ideological struggles were also addressed. The main item of concern from that meeting was when Turki said “If Iran successfully pursues a military program, we will have to follow suit.”⁴¹

Reports of International Organizations

There are also several international institutes, organizations, and regional organizations that monitor the Iranian situation; hence, their distributed reports and studies are incomparable for this research. One report in particular, the *Options in Dealing with Iran’s Nuclear Program*, is worth noting. The credibility of the research stems from the diversity of researchers who prepared it. These included Abdullah Toukan (Chief Executive Officer Strategic Analysis and Global Risk Assessment Center, a Ph.D. in Theoretical Nuclear Physics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Science Adviser to the King of Jordan), and Anthony H. Cordesman, (who holds the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at CSIS, and is the recipient of the US Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medal).⁴² The study recommends a US Political and Military solution, lays out option for the Arab nations, cites risks to Israel, and how to deal with the Iranian Nuclear Weapons Program while encouraging Iran to stop it at the same time. The study also addresses the following issues/questions: “What is the relationship

⁴¹The Guardian, “Prince Turki Al Faisal,” 29 June 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/29/saudi-arabia-prince-turki-arab-spring-iran> (accessed 27 March 2012).

⁴²Center for Strategic and International Study (CSIS), “The Options in Dealing with Iran’s Nuclear Program,” http://csis.org/files/publication/100323_Options_todealwith_Iran.pdf (accessed 16 March 2012).

between terrorism and Weapon of Mass Destruction? “How many nuclear bombs would Iran require to establish itself as a nuclear state?” The report’s conclusion was realistic, and found that Iran is capable of threatening the region with Weapon of Mass Destruction, terrorism, and finally Cyber threats. On the other hand, the report also found that the US is a player in this situation, and also requires an approach that encompasses military, economic, and political interests. Finally, the report cites the differences in the issues involving the Gulf States v. Iran, and the West v. Iran.⁴³

A report issued by the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research entitled “Arabian Gulf Security, Internal and External Challenges,” is considered one of the best reports on the issues of the Gulf and its neighboring countries. The report was put together by a multiplicity of persons ranging from members of the ruling families in the Gulf, as well as security and military officials. In addition, a number of international research specialists also contributed to the report which included researchers from Iran and Middle East and other countries which have common concern about energy security. A cursory look into some of the report’s chapters clarifies its comprehensiveness. It addresses security challenges in the Gulf countries, provides an overall perspective of Gulf Security, illustrates perceptions of power and multiplicity of interests, cites the effects of the US Invasion of Iraq, and describes the dangers posed by terrorism and migrant labor societies.⁴⁴ Some researchers have criticized the report as expressing the ideas of the elite

⁴³ Abdullah Toukan and Anthony H. Cordesman, *Options in Dealing with Iran’s Nuclear Program* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010).

⁴⁴ ECSSR, “Arabian Gulf Security, Internal and External Challenges,” ISBN 978-9948-00-946-7, 2008.

of thinkers and decision makers who see things through the perspective of force only. Furthermore these elites, in accordance with their views, disregard the variations of the political world as well as the social aspects which must be considered in order to fully understand the different causes of conflict and its backgrounds. When viewed in this light, Iran would be characterized as being the best player to deal with regional issues of sectarianism, racism, and other hidden issues by relying on economic, political, security and geographical factors.

Iranian Sources

An important source of reference which explores Iranian ideologies was written by Khomeini, Ayatollah Rouhollah (1901 to 1989), the Iranian spiritual and ideological leader. The milestones laid out in his book *Islamic Government* initiated in a series of lectures (which began in January 1970) given to Iranian Shia students who might be expected to assume positions of influence in Muslim society. The book explained the general structure of political philosophy and planned for the establishment and functioning of Islamic states (Iran beginning in-1979-and Islamic world after-1979-through the exportation of the revolution). Most of the Iranian constitution is based on the ideas of Khomeini. It is unusual, that this book from the first page (introduction) is clear in its hatred of other religions and sects, and encourages fanatic Persian behavior while discouraging any sort of dialogues with others who are not of Persian descent. Khomeini said: "From the very beginning, the historical movement of Islam has had to contend with the Jews, for it was they who first established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems, and as you can see, this activity continues down to the present. Later they were joined by other groups, who were in certain respects, more satanic than they.

These new groups began their imperialist penetration of the Muslim countries about three hundred years ago, and they regarded it as necessary to work for the extirpation of Islam in order to attain their ultimate goals.”⁴⁵ Another Iranian source, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, which was built on the basis of theocracy, concentrates power in the religious leader in Article 12.⁴⁶ Iran is the only country in the world which has its religion and its sects (the Twelver Ja’fari) vested in its Constitution. “The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja’fari school [in usual al-Din and fiqh], will remain eternally immutable” (Article 144). “The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be an Islamic Army which is committed to Islamic ideology and the people, and must recruit into its service individuals who have faith in the objectives of the Islamic Revolution and are devoted to the cause of realizing its goals.”⁴⁷ According to this constitutional mandate, the Army must believe in the revolution ideology. Likewise, the Army must also believe in “exporting revolution,” which leads the Army to search for all means of supporting the government’s goal of building Weapon of Mass Destruction.

While Iranian leaders and thinkers are racing each other to declare their adherence to the principles of Khomeini’s revolution (the foremost being President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad), It is therefore not surprising that the Iranian leadership is seeking to possess nuclear weapons since it is one of the tenets of exporting the revolution, which was confirmed by Khomeini and founded in the Iranian Constitution. Within this same

⁴⁵Imam Khomeini, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, trans. by Prof. Hamid Algar (Islamic Republic of Iran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works).

⁴⁶The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 12.

⁴⁷Ibid.

context, other Iranian works are essential in providing an Iranian point of view within the research.

Web Sources

Other resources are accessible on the internet. Documentary videos of the Iranian nuclear program as well as on-line testimonies of some experts familiar with the Iranian program lend expertise to this topic. *Iranium*, an on-line documentary directed by Alex Traiman is one such viable source. Traiman's documentary "powerfully reports on the many aspects of the threat that America and the world now face. The documentary used rarely-before seen footage of Iranian leaders, and interviews with leading politicians, Iranian dissidents, and experts on Middle East policy, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation."⁴⁸ Also there are large numbers of other internet sources which explore Iran's nuclear weapons and terrorist groups linked to Iran.

The researcher will use the sources of the Iranian government's Internet as current sources from inside Iran with regard to nuclear weapons. Of particular relevance is that the government of Iran is described as using the Internet extensively to serve its interests and communicate with numerous organizations and groups which support Iran throughout various countries. Though relevant, this source can be perceived as a kind of shaded propaganda; particularly, the site of the Office of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei (this site specializes in speeches, appeals and the lessons of Khamenei, who directed his followers on the current issues weekly; thus, anyone currently browsing this site will know the latest developments and the Iranian clergy's point of view regarding

⁴⁸"Iranium," <http://www.imdb.com/video/hulu/vi3121388057> (accessed 12 May 2012).

these events). Likewise, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs site and the official website of the Office of the Iranian President express both the diplomatic and executive points of view. The Iranian Students' News Agency is one of Iran's major news agencies, and is 'unofficially' the closest to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In addition, the FARS news agency is unofficially close to the Iranian Conservatives, as well as the Supreme leader. Both the Iranian Students' News Agency and the FARS are good sources for the around the clock news about Iran. Most international news agencies use those news outlets as viable sources of information as both are better than the official Iranian news agency which often distorts the truths or realities regarding sensitive topics.

Military Resources and Studies

By referring to studies drawn from the researcher's military schooling, it is the researcher's intent to focus on military periodicals, research, doctrinal principles, and theories and not on personal observation. The information provided by military authors will be carefully examined and extrapolated.

There are many studies that have been prepared in military colleges around the world; most focus on the military side and the balance of power in the region, such as the *Military Balance 2010* Report. Other studies deal with war scenarios and the assumed war plans drawn up by other nations or alliances fixed on eliminating Iranian forces. There are only few studies to date concerning the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. These studies are commensurate with the research topic as they relates to the main energy corridor in the region. One of the recent military forums entitled: "Iran, Nukes, & Oil: The Gulf Confrontation," Seminar: NBC Executives and Producers, dated 12 January 2012 given by Barry R. McCaffrey, General, US Army (Retired) addressed the risks that

Iran poses to the Gulf Region. The first points General McCaffrey asserts is that (in his words): “In my judgment we are now in a high risk situation in the Gulf-with a significant probability of Iranian escalation in the coming 90 days. We are ordering three US Navy carrier battle groups into the region.”⁴⁹

In summary, this chapter serves as the basis for citing those reliable sources that will be used for further research. Chapter 3 will argue the methodology by which the researcher will answer the primary and secondary questions.

⁴⁹Barry R. McCaffrey, Gen (Ret), “Iran, Nukes, and oil: The Gulf Confrontation” (Seminar: NBC Executives and Producers 12 January 2012, Alexandria, VA).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher intends to use a methodology that is best designed for analyzing all aspects of a nuclear program. The first step will be to analyze and evaluate the resources relating to Iran's goals in general. The focus here would lend to the researcher's efforts to focus on the primary and secondary questions by identifying the origin and causes of the Iranian ambitions and the Iranian government's ends, and their ways and means of achieving them. An Iranian nuclear program contributes to both a broad approach (way) and a viable resource (mean) in achieving a strategic end.

The researcher will use both the descriptive method to set the stage besides the argued methodologies to answer the secondary questions. The series of answers to these secondary questions will point to an essential conclusion which will answer the primary research question and lend to a proposed conclusion.

The research referred a selection of literature written on this crisis emphasizing the roots and the environment (regional and international) of the conflict in addition to the various players affecting the struggle. In this chapter, the researcher, using the descriptive method, will clarify the threats posed by the social aspects (historical, people, religious) in order to set the stage for the research analysis next chapter. In order to best explain the historic backdrop, the researcher will focus the study around the origins and composition (demographics) of Iranians. The make-up of Iranians has a major impact on the formation of Iranian policy orientations and Iranian behavior in the international community.

Persia in the Early Age

The researcher will give an overview of the history of ancient Iran and empires which ruled Persia since its antiquity. Iran is one of the countries in the world which has shared its traditions; generating a cultural impact throughout the centuries. Iran's cultural impact has spread through the vast stretches of the Indus River to the banks of the Nile, and from China to the heart of Europe. Thus, Persians have been able to link a series of ancient human civilizations throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. Humans have settled in Iran since ancient times. (When Iran broke from southern Iraq, a group of indigenous peoples formed the Sumerians and merged into other Aryan migrations, particularly in the form of waves that emerged from the north origin. These were notably the Parthians, Bactrians residing in the northeast, and Medes, who settled in the north. The Mannaeans inhabited the southwest, and the Persians, who have inhabited the central territory, had the land named after them, which today is known as Persia).⁵⁰

Figure 1 (below) depicts the most important historical stages of Iranian history and evolution.

⁵⁰Mahmoud Shaker, Iran, founder of the message (Beirut, 1399–1979), 13.

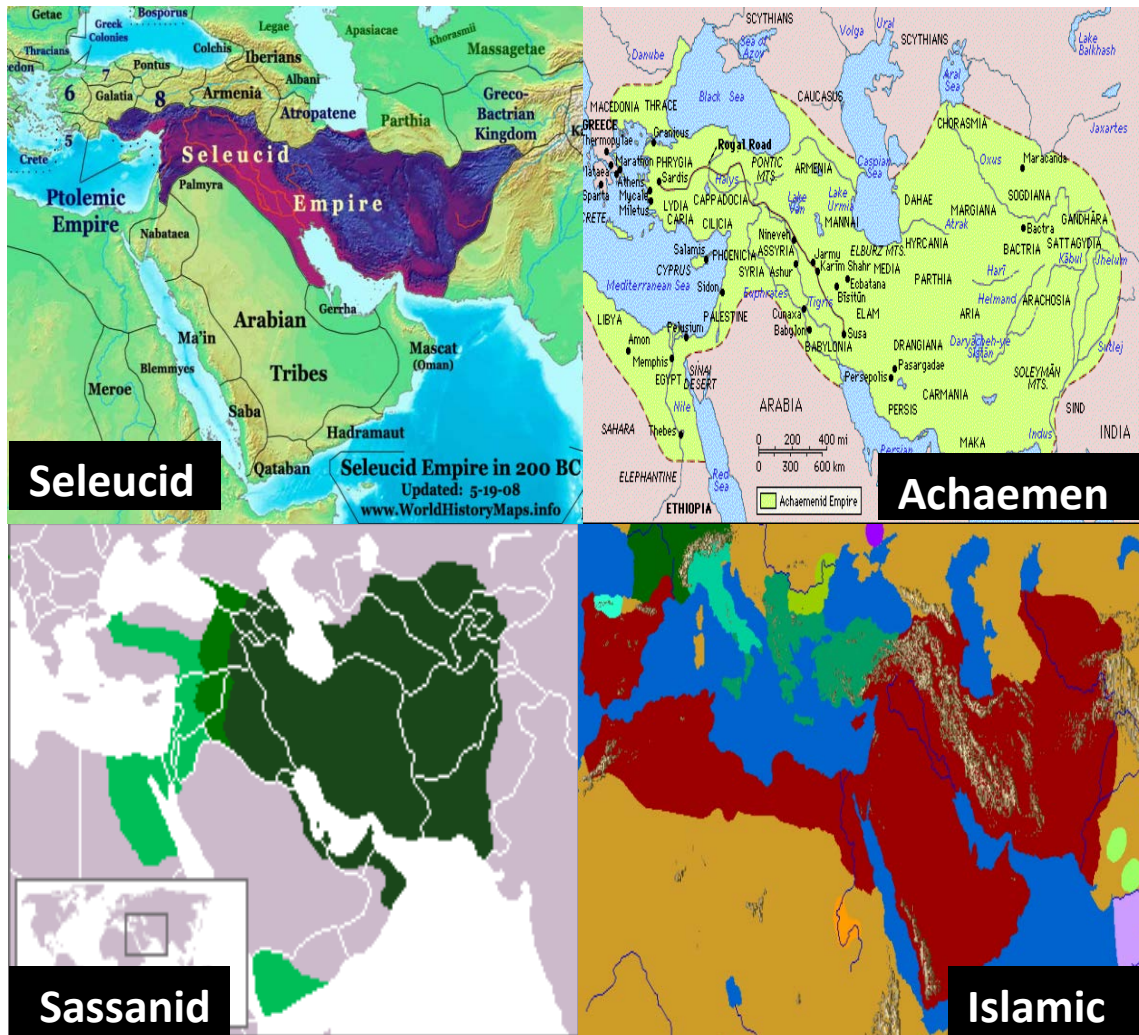


Figure 1. Map of Iranian Historical Periods

Source: Iran Chamber Society, <http://www.iranchamber.com/history/achaemenids/achaemenids.php> (accessed 10 May 2012); Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, “Seleucie Empire,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire (accessed 10 May 2012; World History Map, <http://www.worldhistorymap.com/> (accessed 10 May 2012); Atlas of World History, <http://www.atlasofworldhistory.com/index.shtm> (accessed 10 May 2012).

Early Persian history is categorized into five distinct periods; Ancient History, Iranian History before the Aryans (see figure 1), Achaemenid Period,⁵¹ the Seleucid Dynasty,⁵² and the Sassanid Dynasty,⁵³ Islam.⁵⁴

Ancient History

The ancient Persian history begins with the earliest evidence of human presence on the Iranian plateau around one hundred thousand years BC and ends with the beginning of the first millennium BC. This period has been validated by the discovery of Neolithic artifacts found in excavations carried out in recent years in a number of caves, rock shelters, mostly in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran.

Iranian History before the Aryans

Several peoples lived in the region before the advent of Aryans Persian, such as the Medes and the Elamites, who settled the land later known as Iran. Most, if not all, of the history references noted that governments before the Persians did not have unity and stability, but rather chaos and tribal wars. The researchers in Iran's history find that the first and main civilization of what is now Iran, were the Elamites who may have settled in southwestern Iran during the era of early 3000 BC, believed to be of Arab origins. In the

⁵¹Iran Chamber Society, <http://www.iranchamber.com/history/achaemenids/achaemenids.php> (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁵²Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, "Seleucie Empire," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁵³World History Map, <http://www.worldhistorymap.com/> (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁵⁴Atlas of World History, <http://www.atlasofworldhistory.com/index.shtm> (accessed 10 May 2012).

16th century BC, the Aryan migration descended to Iran from Central Asia and eventually settled on two major groups in Iran (Medes and Persian). The northwest was stable and established the Kingdom of Media and the others lived in the region of southern Iran, who the Greeks later called *Persis*. This is where the name Persia takes its roots-from the word *Persis*. The Medo-Persians named the land, “Iran,” meaning “land of Aryans.” By the 7th century BC, the Medes became rulers of Persians.⁵⁵

Achaemenid Empire (648 to 330 BC)

The Persians overthrew the rulers in 550 BC and were led by Cyrus the Great. By 539 BC, Cyrus had conquered Babel, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. After Cyrus’s death, his son Cambyses II, continued on to add Egypt to the Achaemenid Empire in 525 BC. In 522 BC after the death of Cambyses, Darius the Great became the ruler of the Empire and it flourished under his wise rule. In 500 BC, the empire expanded westward and even included what is today Libya and spread eastward to what is now Pakistan, and from the Gulf of Oman in the south, to the Aral Sea in the north. By the mid-5th century BC, Alexander the Great conquered and ended the Achaemenid Empire. The new ruler configured a new culture blending the Greek and Persian civilizations to create a new global empire, but Alexander died (323 BC) without achieving his objective, and leaving establishing a new ruler family known as the Seleucids.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Global Arabic Encyclopedia, Iran (1996), <http://www.mawsoah.net> (accessed 9 May 2012), 463.

⁵⁶LTC Fiaz zahi and others, Iran, History and Religious, by Saudi CGSC, 2008 (with modification).

The Seleucid Dynasty

The Seleucid Dynasty followed the period of Alexander the Great. As one of Alexander's former Cavalry Commander, Seleucus ruled Iran until about the year 250 BC when, following mass defections of his own army, his empire was invaded by the armies of Parthia (Kingdom in the southeast of the Caspian Sea) and eventually conquered.⁵⁷

The Sassanid Dynasty

Established by Ardashir I in 224 AD, the Sassanids ruled Iran for more than 400 years. During this period, Iranian art flourished and the Sassanid kings improved cities, roads, and irrigation systems. The end of the Sassanid was brought in the seventh century with the spread of Islam during the Caliphate.⁵⁸

The Location of Persia-Iran

The actual "physical" and "geographic" location of a country often gives the people of that country special characteristic, and can influence certain policies of that nation's government. The term "geo-political" impacts the nation's strength and influences its vital interests and the roles that a particular nation plays in the international arena. Additionally, geo-politics affects a state's political decisions, its economy, and the nature of its military (in terms of its size, shape and posture).

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

Iran is located in the southwest part of Asia.⁵⁹ The country is situated in bountiful supplies of oil and natural gas fields located between the Arabian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. It also controls the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most important crossings water in the world.



Figure 2. Ethno-Religious Distribution of Iran

Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas at Austin The http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east.html (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁵⁹Massoud Alkhond, *Encyclopedia Historical Geography* (Lebanon: Renaissance Pioneer House of Printing and Publishing, 1990), 94.

Location and Climate

Iran lies between 25-40 degrees north of the equator and between 44- 63 degrees east of the Greenwich meridian. Most of Iran's territory lies within the tropics and the temperature is warm throughout most of the year. The temperate climate has had a significant impact on the diversity of Iranian settlements whereby the population centers concentrated in areas of the north and west because of the moderate climate and fertile plains. While the population is split in the country's interior, the eastern part of Iran is dry and rugged land. Thus, the distribution of nuclear facilities has been primarily developed in the interior and southwestern parts of Iran, where the population's main economic activity is agriculture (both crops and animals).

Coastal Access

Iran enjoys a robust coastline by which it has free interface to maritime activities, and is linked to the world. Through its coastal access, Iranians can directly communicate, and flexibly move about; having free access to trade. Iran's political and economic history is strongly linked to its coastal privileges where it has a view of three incredibly important bodies of water; the Arabian Gulf in the southwest, the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean in the south, and the Caspian Sea in the north. The Iranian coasts overlook the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Gulf, and have great value by giving Iran a strategic advantage in the region. In addition, there are more than six Iranian offshore oil fields which stretch to depths of 4000m-5000 m below the surface. The Iranian coastline on the Caspian Sea has great economic significance due to the importance of the large oil reserves in the Caspian region, carrying with it the likelihood of high oil productivity in the future.

Geopolitical Leverage

Iran's strategic location gives it leverage over other Gulf nations and impacts its relations with neighboring states; whether in peace time or in war. In general, the increased probability for the emergence of problems between a particular state, and its neighboring states is proportional to the number of states with which it shares common borders. . . .In the case of Iran, this is certainly the case as it borders the Central Asian republics of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkmenistan in the north, and Turkey to the northwest. In the west, Iran shares a border with Iraq, and in the east, it shares a common border with Afghanistan and Pakistan (refer to figure 2). Thus, the fact that Iran shares common borders with seven different nations raises the probabilities for instability and provocation; history in fact supports this notion. Some historical points of friction have included:

1. Iran's claim to the Bahrain Islands, despite the waiver of its Shah in 1970 following the referendum held in Bahrain, and the subsequent Iranian occupation of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.
2. There have been several border problems with Iraq (the Shatt al-Arab) throughout the years.
3. There have certainly different points of view over claims to the Caspian Sea Oil Reserves between Iran and Russia, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.
4. There have also been border disputes between Iran and Azerbaijan (which is supported by the US) over issues in the Caspian Sea region.

It is clearly evident that through its massive borders alone, Iran faces many challenges to national security in some way, shape or form brought about either by Iranian provocation, or from Iranian retaliation.

Table 1. Lengths of Coastline and Land Borders

Region	Length/ km	Percentage%	Total
Arabian Gulf	1180	46.75	2524 km
Oman Gulf and Arabian Sea	700	27.37	
Caspian Sea	644	25.51	
Iraq	1280	24.59	5204 km approximately
Turkey	470	9	
Afghanistan	837	16.08	
Pakistan	877	16.85	
Central Asian Republics, (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkmenistan)⁶⁰	1740	33.48	

Source: Encyclopedia of the Third World, vol. 111, rev. ed (London, 1982), 839.

⁶⁰ Alkhond, 95.

Population and Demographics

Iran has a population of approximately 77 million inhabitants,⁶¹ and although Iranians are primarily of Shia descent (the country's only official religious doctrine); the Sunni population constitutes a large portion of the remainder of Iranians.

The nation also has many, different ethnic groups which include:

Persian 51 percent

Azeri 24 percent

Kurd 7 percent

Lur 2 percent

Baloch 2 percent

Arab 3 percent

Turkmen 2 percent

Gilaki and Mandarin 8 percent

Other 1 percent (2008 est.).⁶²

Several languages are also spoken in Iran. These include:

Persian (the official language) 53 percent

Azeri Turkish 18 percent

Kurdish 10 percent

Gilaki and Mandarin 7 percent

Lur 6 percent

⁶¹CIA Fact Book, "Iran," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html> (accessed 16 November 2012).

⁶²Ibid.

Baloch 2 percent

Arabic 3 percent

Other 2 percent (2008 est.).⁶³

The official religion in Iran is Islam is at 98 percent of the population:

Shi'a Muslim 89 percent.

Sunni Muslim-different ethnicities- 9 percent.

There are other religions as well these include Zoroastrian, Judaism, Christianity, and Bahá'í.⁶⁴

Iran's population distribution is varies greatly and is affected by several factors which include:

1. Areas of rainfall and land suitable for agriculture.
2. Weather variations from region to region.
3. Urban development.
4. The presence of water sources and rivers.

Most Iranians live in areas south of the Caspian Sea and in the northwestern part of the country; hence, this is where most Iranian cities are located. Education and public health are government priorities, and though there has already been significant progress made in these fields, there are still many Iranians inflicted by various diseases in the rural areas in spite of an aggressive Iranian drug and pharmaceutical program.

In summary, through the application of human geography, the multiplicity of Iranian ethnicities, religions and languages, supports causes for weaknesses in the unity

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

and coherence within Iranian society. These indicators alone pose threats to Iranian national security and increase the burden on the Iranian security services to not only secure its vast borders, but to look within at its own causes for instability.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Chapter 3 pointed out that Iran enjoys an ancient civilization and is geographically distinct in terms of the availability of wealth and its privileged position, with a variety (races) of human culture. In this chapter, the focus will be on the last 1500 years. During this period, the Persian overlaps with other races, as well as different religions and sects, have been mixed in order to achieve political goals.

The Roots of Motivation to Acquire a Nuclear Weapon (History, Religion, Political)

Iranians have been looking to nuclear weapons through the variety of historical and religious circumstances through which it has passed during the last thousand years. Therefore, the current political system was designed based on these visions. It is important to reveal the historical and religion factors that influenced the Iranian political structure.

Historical Roots of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The aim of the condensed overview of Iranian history is an effort to show the extent of the conflicts, instabilities and changes in religious doctrines (schools) and cultures which seem to come about almost every 100 years. Iran has become a combination of everything (religions, races, culture). Additionally, this overview will clarify that all invasions have come from the East (Arab) or the West (Mongolian), and then most recently, the British and Russian invasions. By the end of the historical

overview, a general picture will be formed which will clearly reveal why the Iranian governments in the twentieth century, are seeking nuclear weapons.

Muslim Conquest (637 to 651)

The Islamic (Arab) conquests began in Persia (632) at the end of the succession of Caliph Abu- Bakr. Most territories were conquered during the reign of Caliph Omar bin Al Khattab. The conquest of other surrounding areas occurred during the reign of Caliph Othman bin Affan.⁶⁵ The Sassanids tried to resist the Muslims (Arabs) at the beginning, but they were defeated in the battle of Al Qadeseyah (637).⁶⁶ Muslim Arabs conquered all of Persia which ended the reign of the Sassanid Dynasty. During the 10th century, the Arab character weakened and Iran was divided as follows:

⁶⁵These three names mentioned, explained why the Persians (even Muslim Persians) hated these Caliphs; namely, because they destroyed the Persian rule. The Persian Shiites believed these caliphs were conceded tyrants and oppressors.

⁶⁶The name of this battle explains why Saddam Hussein called all of his battles with Iran: "Al Qadeseya."

Table 2. The Empires and Kingdoms ruled Persia through the Islamic Era
(the last 1400 years)

Empires and Kingdoms	Period	Ethnicity	Religion
The Tahirid	821-873	Arab	Muslim—Sunni
The Alaouite (Alavids)	864-928	Arab	Muslim—Shia Zaidi
The Saffarid	861-1003	Persian	Combination of Muslim—Shia and Zoroastrianism
The Samanids	875- 999	Persian	Muslim—Sunni
The Ziyarid	928-1043	Persian	Majority Zoroastrianism, minority Islam
The Buyid (Buyahids)	934-1055	Persian	Combination of Muslim—Shia and Zoroastrianism
The Ghaznavids (Ghznioin)	967-1187	Turkish	Muslim—Sunni
The Ghurids (Shansabānī)	1149-1212	Pashtun or Tajik	Muslim—Sunni
The Seljuk	1037-1194	Turkish	Muslim—Sunni
The Khwarazmian	1177-1233	Turkish	Muslim—Sunni
All of above-these kingdoms, states and regions were under the nominal control of the Caliph until the Mongol eliminated the Caliph			
The Mongol Empire swept Iran, Iraq, and Syria in large numbers, killed thousands of people, and destroyed many cities, Inhabitants remained			
The Alelkhanih (Ilhanato)	1256-1353	Mongol	Buddhism, Shamanism, later Islam—Shia
The Muzaffarids	1313-1394	Persian	Muslim—Sunni
The Jalayirids	1339-1432	Mongol	Buddhism, Shamanism, then later Islam—Shia
The Timurid	1370-1506	Uzbeks	Muslim—Sunni
The Qara Qoyunlu	1407-1468	Turkom	Muslim—Shia
The Aq Qoyunlu	1378-1508	Turkom	Muslim—Shia
Nadir Shah (Afsharid)	1739-1796	Turkom	Muslim—Shia turned to Sunni

Kariem Khan (Zand)	1750-1794	Kurdish	Muslim–Shia
Alsavoih Empire	1501-1722- 1738	Turkish	Muslim—Sunni, were fighting against the Ottoman Empire which was Sunni. Then Shah Abbas, for political reasons made it obligatory for Iranians to change their faith to Shia in order to gain religious support over the Turkish Empire.

Source: Created by author.

Strain of the Alkagadet (Qajar) 1781 to 1925

The Qajar government gave Iran its modern identity. Because of this, it is mentioned separately from the table (above). Turkmen tribes seized power in Persia during the period from 1779 to 1797. Since that time, the Qajar family had ruled Iran until 1925, and transferred their capital to Tehran in 1796.⁶⁷ Agha Mohammad outlined the borders for the country and adopted the surname Shah. In 1826, Russia invaded Iran in order to gain access to the Persian Gulf. As the Russian Army defeated Iran, the two nations signed the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828 which provided Russia with land north of the Aras River (today, this is the current border between Iran and Azerbaijan).

In 1856, Iran tried to seize the northwest portion of Afghanistan, but Britain, who ruled over Afghanistan at that time, declared war on Iran. In 1857, both countries signed a peace treaty and Iran renounced all of its demands and claims in Afghanistan. In the early twentieth century, the British and Russian influences increased in Iran. The British

⁶⁷Global Arabic Encyclopedia, 464.

used their influence to establish the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company with the intent of developing the oil fields in southwestern Iran. In 1906, the King of Kajar, Shah Muzaffar, was forced by Iranian intellectuals to give Iran its first Constitution and its first Parliament.⁶⁸

The World War I and Reza Shah (Pahlavi) 1914 to 1925

Iran became a battlefield during World War I, and although they remained neutral, the Russians fought against the Turkish forces in northwestern Iran in an effort to defend their oil fields in Baku and on the Caspian Sea. The British Army defended the oil fields of Khuzestan against Iranian Kashkine attacks (the Kashkines were an Iranian group led by German officers). In 1921, Ziauddin Tabatabai, a politician and journalist, and Reza Khan (an officer in the Iranian Cavalry) overthrew the Alkret Government. In 1925, Reza became the Shah of Iran and changed his family name to Pahlawi. During his reign, he introduced many programs that aided in modernizing Iran and sheltered the country from foreign interference.

World War II and the National Movement 1939 to 1979

Shortly after the start of World War II in 1939, Iran declared its neutrality.⁶⁹ While the Allies wanted to use railways across Iran in order to ship war supplies from Britain to the Soviet Union, Reza Shah refused their requests. Because of this denial, British and Soviet forces invaded Iran in 1941 and forced Reza Shah to renounce the

⁶⁸Al Sabagh Saeed, *History of Iran, Political Shifting Roots 1900-1941* (Cairo: Cultural House, 2000), 33.

⁶⁹Dr. Abdul Naeem Hassanein, *Iran under Medieval Islam, Sunni and Shiite* (Mansoura: Dar el Salaam, 2000), 99.

throne to his son Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The new Shah signed another Treaty with Britain and with the former Soviet Union that gave them permission to use the Iranian railways and to retain forces in Iran until the end of the war. The effects caused by the presence of foreign forces in Iran during the war inspired widespread nationalism among Iranians. Led by Mohamed Mosaddeg, Iranians demanded the end of British control of the oil industry. In 1951, the Iranian Parliament voted in favor of developing the oil industry under government ownership. The Iranian Prime Minister, who refused to implement the law, was expelled and replaced by Mohammed Mosaddeq. In 1953, Britain prevented the purchase of the Iranian oil (plus a surplus of oil) on the world markets. As a result, Iran suffered heavy financial losses and tried to offset the Shah's rule. Mosaddeq and his followers ousted the Shah into exile. Years later, the Shah returned to power with assistance of the US Central Intelligence Agency and arrested Mosaddeq.

During the first part of the 1960s, the Shah began a series of economic and social reforms. Known as the "White Revolutions," they were subsequently renamed as the Revolution of the Shah and the people. At the same time, the increase of oil revenues was used for the development of industrial projects (which included the nuclear program).

The Shah's absolute and authoritative rule (politically) raised much opposition; especially among students and intellectuals. The Shah was criticized for:

1. Refusing freedom of expression
2. Civil rights abuses
3. Use of the Secret Police Force to crush the opposition against his rule
4. Corruption in the government and policies which destroyed Iran's economy.

5. Violations of Islamic (Shia) teachings (Ironically, today's Revolutionary Government is criticized for the same offenses).

Revolution and Islamic Republic 1979 to the Present

In the late 1970s, various opponents of the Shah combined under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. On 18 January 1979, after widespread protests and riots against his rule, the Shah left Iran. In February of 1979, Khomeini returned to Iran from Paris and declared Iran as an Islamic Republic on the teachings of Shia-Islam.

Khomeini re-launched the Islamic revolution and became Supreme leader of Iran. "Khomeini has demanded the repeating of Iran's revolution in other Islamic countries as a first step toward uniting those countries with Iran, and rather than have their confrontations with Iran, that they should face the enemies of Islam, export the revolution to face imperialism and the liberate Palestine."⁷⁰ Khomeini's Revolutionary Council was founded in order to implement new policies; many of which were very hostile toward the US because of its support the Shah. Internally, banks, insurance companies, and modern industry were all nationalized.

In October of 1979, the US allowed the former Shah to come to the US for medical treatment. As a resentment of the US' continued support to the Shah, Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979 and held most of the Embassy staff as hostages. The students refused to release the detainees until the US obliged to return the Shah to Iran for trial. The Shah eventually died in Egypt in July of 1980, and the hostages were freed in 20 January 1981. On 28 January 1980, Abolhassan

⁷⁰Dr. Walid Abdel Nasser, *A Study on Iran, the State and Revolution* (Cairo: Dar El Shorouk, 1989), 71.

Banisadr was elected President of Iran, but in June he secretly fled to France with Massoud Rajavi (the leader of people's Mujahedeen, the largest opponent party even today).

In 1982, the Experts Council voted to replace Khomeini once he officially passed. When Khomeini died on 3 June 1988, his successor, Parliamentary Speaker, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, became President of Iran in July 1988.

In May of 1997, the reformist Mohammad Khatami won the Presidential election that started the change, reform and strengthening of the Iranian institutions. During this period, the Iranian nuclear program developed more fully and became quite mature.

The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President in June of 2005 marked the return of conservative control of Iran. As President (even today) Ahmadinejad has enjoyed the broad support of the Revolutionary Guard and the Basij militia. It is during his tenure, dating back to 2005, that "the Iranian nuclear issue began to develop quickly and strained relations with most of the world; especially with the West."⁷¹

The Religious Environment and its Impact on Iranian Policy Configuration

The rise of the Safawid (1502 to 1736) aimed to unite Iran by creating a homogeneous religious community. During that time, the role of Shia scholars emerged as lead figures of authority almost to the point of being an independent institution of the state. The Shah and his governments were supposed to be subject to the scholar's

⁷¹Rana Abu Al Rifai, *The Iranian Nuclear Issue and the Conflict in the Middle East* (Arab Science House of Printing), 21.

guidance. In spite of these customs, this was not achieved during the periods of the Alkagari Covenants (1779 to 1925) and the Pahlavi Reign (1925 to 1979).

There existed a certain degree of tension in the relationship between political power and scholars, and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the notion of Shiite denomination and the *Wilāyah Faqih* became popular. Main pillars were established within the state based on bilateral sovereignty for Allah and in the guardian *Faqih*, and the people were viewed in a “vertical” way not “horizontal” way. “*Wilāyah* is a system of supervision and management of state organs in order to ensure applicability to Islamic provisions and prevent deviation.”⁷² The guardian *Faqih* (Supreme Leader) complements the divine dimension of the Republic system as Commander and Imam. He is the coordinator between the hidden Imam and the nation.

The Iranian Constitution stressed in either the original form in 1979, or the amended form in 1989, the responsibilities of *Al-Faqih*, who determines the State’s general policies and monitors their implementations. *Al-Faqih* appoints oversight boards on laws and senior officials of the media, the Army, the Revolutionary Guards, and chairs the General Command of the Army. All these appointees are made with or without the coordination with the President of the Republic.⁷³

⁷²Mhagrei, Masih Sheikh. *Islamic Revolution and the Bright Future of Victorious* (Tehran: Revolution Media Center, 1984), 109.

⁷³Mahmoud Shaker, *Iran, Geography, History, People, Natural Resources* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al Resalh, 1986), 21.

The Political System

Modern Iranian history and its religious environment influenced the formation of successive Iranian governments; however, the revolutionary government mixed history with the religion, and thus was introduced the so-called *Velayat-e Faqih* (*Wilayat al Faqih*), The *Wilayat al Faqih* gives absolute powers to the Supreme Leader; consequently, the political structure has become one of the essential problems for Iran when facing both regional states and the international community as well.⁷⁴

The Iranian government is a theocracy, which is a state under the influence of religious scholars. Iran follows its Islamic governance approach and applies the twelve Shia denominations. Its system is subjected to all resolutions of the Council of Guardians (Trustees).

The Iranian Regime claims that it is a democratic system by virtue of the fact that it holds presidential elections every four years. The Iranian President has the right to reelection only once, and just like the Guardians Council, there is an Iranian Parliament representing its entire people; Azeri, Persians, Armenians, Jews, Arabs, Bloch and Kurds.

Political and Governmental Institutions

The President of Iran is considered the head of the political system; thus, he also holds the title of Prime Minister. Last year, the Supreme Leader threatened to cancel the

⁷⁴Takyh, *Hidden Iran*.

Office of the President, and to return to the old system where the Parliament elects the Prime Minister.⁷⁵

The Iranian Legislature

The Iranian legislature consists of the “Parliament” (which is a single board) called the Islamic Consultative Assembly, or “Board (*Majlis*).” It consists of 290 seats and members are elected directly by popular vote for a four-year term of service. Each of the members must be approved by the Supreme Leader.⁷⁶

Executive Body

The key members of the Executive Body are:

1. Head of State: The Supreme Leader (today it is Ali Hussein Khamenei who has held the position since 4 June 1989).

2. Head of the Government: The President is the head of the Iranian Political System (the position has been held by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad since 3 August 2005).

3. Government: The Council of Ministers selected by the President with the consent of the legislature.⁷⁷ The Supreme Leader has some control over appointments in sensitive ministries. There are three legislative branches that check and monitor, and are considered part of the executive authority. They are:

⁷⁵National Public Radio, “In Iran, Secret Plans To Abolish The Presidency?” <http://www.npr.org/2011/11/21/142603926/in-iran-secret-plans-to-abolish-the-presidency> (accessed 2 May 2012).

⁷⁶United States Institute of Peace, “The Iran Prime,” <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/parliament> (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

A. Board of Experts: The Board of Experts consists of 86 clerics. They are elected by the people, and are responsible under the Constitution for the report of the successor of the “Supreme Leader.” They examine the successor’s knowledge and use scientific analysis to determine his qualifications in the study of law, as well as his loyalties to the principles of the revolution. The Board of Experts also has the authority to rate the performance of the Supreme Leader and if necessary, impeach him. Notwithstanding, the members of the Board of Experts are approved by the Supreme Leader before they are elected to their positions.

On 8 March 2011, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani lost his position as head of the Assembly of Experts after he was accused by conservatives that he was close to the reformist opposition (Green Movement). Rafsanjani’s defeat, the most prominent leader in Iranian political life since the outbreak of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, marks a victory for the conservative movement in the Assembly of Experts and marked an increase in the power and influence of the religious establishment because it eliminated any appearance of opposition. (The Supreme Leader eventually brought him back in March of 2012).

B. Expediency Council: The Expediency Council is an Executive Advisory Body consisting of more than 40 permanent members. These members represent all key government departments and include the heads of the three powers of Government. It also includes religious members of the Council of Guardians. The permanent members are appointed by the Supreme Leader for a period of five years. The Council’s role is to resolve issues in the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches by consulting and advising the religious leaders on political issues. This process has been in place since

1989. The *Expediency Council's* powers were increased in 2005 (at least ostensibly) to serve as the supervisory authority for the Government.

C. Board of Trustees-Board of Guardians: The Board of Trustees-Board of Guardians is composed of a body of 12 members, six of whom are cleric members selected by the Supreme Leader, and six experts who are nominated in accordance with the Judiciary Act (which is a law that is both monitored and executed under the control of the Supreme Leader), and approved by the Council from a list of candidates by the Judiciary Branch (which is also under the control of the Supreme Leader). The members of the Board of Trustees-Board of Guardians serve for a period of six years. The task of this body is to determine the constitutionality of legislation and to ensure that it conforms to Islamic law. They also assess the eligibility of candidates for other government posts, monitor all elections.⁷⁸

Judiciary Branch

The Iranian legal system is based on Islamic law (Twelver Shiism). The Iranian Supreme Court is the highest court in the country. It has a Supreme Council of Magistracy which consists of four members. These members have unlimited powers and have the responsibilities to monitor the imposition of the law and to set all judicial and legal policies. They also monitor small courts, special religious courts, the Court of the Revolution, and the Special Administrative Court.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Frontline, "The structure of Power in Iran," <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tehran/inside/govt.html> (accessed 12 May 2012).

⁷⁹Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist by Imam Khomeini.

Elections

The Supreme Leader is appointed for life by the Board of Experts. The Expert Council members are elected by direct popular vote and serve for eight years. The President is also elected by popular vote and serves for four years. The President is subject for reelection to a second term (and possibly even a third term, but this is not usually the case).

Internal Policy

Senior clergy directly control the Iran's internal policies. They are commonly referred to as political mullahs. The most powerful clergy are found in the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches, the Council of Guardians, the Council of Experts, and the Association of Religious Professors of Qom (Possession/ Hozah).

There also exists an informal power structure in Iran which consists of different authorities: (1) Senior Clergy, (2) Senior Officials, (3) Former influential personalities and groups, and (4) Iranian Bazaar Merchants (the true supporters of the Government in periods of sanction).⁸⁰

Despite the exclusion of most clergy in economic institutions and other governmental institutions, they still have veto authority in Iran by dominating the street (and the people) and by controlling the majority in Parliament. Many clergy are backed by Revolutionary Guards through subsidiaries relating to internal security and by those who guard the regime from opposition groups. The clergy in essence represent the continuity of internal politics in Iran now, and for the foreseeable future.

⁸⁰Coville, *Iran, Invisible Revolution*, 97.

The official Iranian political parties are a relatively new phenomenon. Most conservatives prefer to work through political pressure groups rather than through political parties. Often political blocs are formed before the elections and resolved shortly thereafter.

Strategic Analysis of Iranian History

Persian history is based on its own ancient civilization. Over time, its Constitution and political system have enabled it to expand. Still, most researchers who have studied all of the stages of this civilization agreed that the causes of Iranian collapses throughout its history have typically been brought on by racism and glorification of Persian culture. This hypothesis is evident dating back to the Achaemenid Empire which disregarded Alexander the Great (who subsequently devastated them). Also when the Iranian Sassanids disregarded local Arabs, they too were devastated (the same has happened with the Afghans in Heart). Currently, President Ahmadinejad and the Supreme Leader, when seen together in televised speeches, are talking about the greatness of the Iranian people while referring to non-Persians as non-civilized Western people who hate the Iranians and who wish to eliminate them. One then must ask the question: Will the Supreme Leader be the cause of the end of their State (Persia) due to his tenacity in the issue of the nuclear file?

The Iranian people have been dominated by hard-line leaders throughout their history. Iran's history has illustrated that successive governments who have ruled Persia (and there have been more than 20 governments over the past 1400 years) have eliminated both government opposition groups and those Iranians (and their families) who showed loyalties to the former government. Most recently, following the 1979

Iranian Revolution, the new Iranian government liquidated all former regime loyalists and confiscated their property; their style of “purge” was akin to that which was done in the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik Revolution.

The various races living in Iran mixed rapidly and sequentially since the seventh century. The Arab conquest of Iran was followed by the invasions of the Seljuk (Turks), the Mongols, the Uzbeks, the Ottomans, the Afsharids (Afghans), and the Zands (Kurds). The succession of rule by varying races and or tribes has been a major factor in Iran’s political instability over the years.

The Iranian people need (and have sought) permanent enemies in an effort to one day unite their leadership. In doing so, their leaders have pursued an active campaign against the multiple ethnicities and varying ideologies of surrounding states whose beliefs differ racially from their own Iranian (Persian) beliefs. Thus, the Iranian government, toward this end, found its likely foe in the US (and those countries allied with the US) beginning in 1979.

Iran’s geostrategic location also makes it in alluring to the major powers (Britain, the former Soviet Union, the US and China). Because of its strategic location, Iran finds itself in the middle of a region that attracts more attention than any other place on the planet.

Iranian enmity towards Arabs is 1400 years old, and dates back to when the Arabs eliminated Persian power and influence in the region. Iranians are taught in their history lessons that Arabs have tried for hundreds of year to control Arab Shiites in order to prevent them from holding any religious positions of authority or influence. A historical example is found in the Shiite religious leader in Iraq *al-Sistani* who originated in Iran

but still have difficulty speaking Arabic. For the most part, Arab religious leader of Shiite origin have all but been eliminated throughout the Arab world.

In short, Iranians believe that their own history is one marked with Persian persecution for over a thousand years. Today, Iranians believe that military force, including nuclear weapon, is essential for their survival in order to protect them from the yet another outside attack, and they look to a nuclear arsenal as a way of preventing yet another series of persecutions.

Strategic Analysis of Iranian Religion-Politics

Religious Analysis

An Islamic government is built “on the basis of *Wilāyah Faqih* (clerical rule), and is only a first step towards the establishment of a ‘global state.’ This was Khomeini’s idea of the Islamic state; one that refuses geographical borders between Muslim countries and recognizes what he called “ideological borders.”⁸¹

The Supreme Leader is considered the one who acts on behalf of the awaited Mahdi (hidden Imam). This principle is written in the Iranian Constitution (Article V, Chapter I). The philosophy of the Iranian Shiite is such that the “Imam Mahdi” is a representative of “Imam Ali”; and Imam Ali is both the guardian and the deputy of the Prophet Mohamed. According to these edicts, whoever opposes the Iranian regime or anyone who protests against rulings of the Supreme Leader is considered a warrior (and enemy) against Allah, and thus, is subject to execution.

⁸¹ Abdel Nasser, 58.

The Supreme Leader has absolute power and control of the state, and makes every decision that governs and affects every aspects of Iranian life (albeit political, judicial, religious, social and cultural). All of these powers are vested in the Iranian Constitution, promoted in accordance with the Shiite faith, and validate with in the Iranian political structure.

Within the Iranian regime (subordinate to the Supreme Leader) there are varying levels of unorthodox political agencies where clergy control political decisions. The purposes of these complex entities are to give the clerics tight control on power; though appearing as democratic in nature, they are anything but democratic.

Political Analysis

Though the 1979 Iranian Revolution was initiated by a variety of different groups (nationalists, Islamists, seculars, Marxists, intellectuals, and students), who combined together to oppose and eventually overthrow the Shah, the Revolutionary movement was eventually hijacked by Iranian clergy. In the years since the Iranian Revolution, Iranian clergy have empowered themselves at every level of government and within society throughout the Iranian state.

The current Iranian government feels that nothing should distract it from its plans of “survivability”—albeit created in a way that rolls the West (and its allies) as a common foe. Despite the tensions that Iran’s motives have caused throughout the Middle East—it remains steadfast nonetheless; manipulating the media to play up its rhetoric.

Whenever international pressures are intensified, Iran always sends positive messages; even under the most difficult of conditions, in order to circumvent clashes, and to create (among the viewing world) a notion of “political choices.” A clear (and recent)

example of this can be seen following Israel's threats to strike Iranian nuclear facilities. Following these threats, the Iranian government agreed to talks in Istanbul with a 5+1 Group (in April 2012) and then in Baghdad (in May 2012).⁸²

Regarding issues of Muslims, the Iranian government plays upon these issues as a means to deceive the Muslim world and serve its own interests. Iran has allowed the Ammal organization to kill Muslim Palestinian civilians in Lebanon,⁸³ and while this was taking place, the Supreme Leader (Khomeini) asked his supporters in one of his sermons, that they should not pay attention to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982; thus, painting Israel as the culprit in the eyes of not only the Iranian people, but the rest of the world. Additionally, in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Iranian government has backed the Christian Armenian forces that fight in Nagorno-Karabakh against Muslim Azeris in an effort to prevent Azeri independence in northern Iran.⁸⁴ Further, the Iranian government cooperated with Israel (during "Iran Gate").

Those who follow Iranian politics dating back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979 will find that the Iranian government evades acts of sabotage and terrorism across the globe by alleging a lack of knowledge of these events and then later using them to oust political opponents. In fact, the Supreme Leader (Khomeini) denied knowledge of the storming of Iranian students storming the US Embassy in 1979 and used the event to instead to topple the Government of former Prime Minister and Monarchy. In 2011, when

⁸²Inside Iran, "Iran Diplomacy," <http://www.insideiran.org/news/iran-diplomacy-letter-from-berlin/> (accessed 8 May 2012).

⁸³Lebanese Armed Movement during the Civil War.

⁸⁴Al Subki, D. Amal, *Political History of Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Kuwait: Dar Al-Kuwait, 2000), 71.

Iranian students stormed the British Embassy in Tehran (in a manner similar to that of the US Embassy in 1979), it was an effort to try and topple the government of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In the days which followed, the Iranian government condemned the storming of the British Embassy via a statement by the Foreign Minister on 29 November 2011.⁸⁵ In an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, the British Ambassador Dominick Chilcott said: “Iran is not the kind of country where spontaneous manifestations happen and where there are attacks on foreign embassies. This type of activity happens only with the consent and support of the State.”⁸⁶

When looking at Iranian political ambitions, and then linking diplomatic and religious ideologies which convey that a Shiite revolution MUST be imported to the outside world, it is imperative to look closely at the means by which Iranian promotes this cause (via media exploitation, intelligence, financial support to proxies, and support to pro-government parties within the region). Moreover, when viewing itself as a Shiite minority in the world, the defense of its own identity, given its history of persecution and inferiority, strongly confirms the notion of its quest for nuclear weapons.

The Iranian Government’s Threatening Ambitions

It seems that the Iranian government has clearly set its strategic goals and objectives, (although not declared publicly) and mobilized all of its possible ways and means to achieve these goals. Dr. Abdul Rahim Baloch, a member of the Association of

⁸⁵Cable News Network (CNN), “London warns Iran,” http://arabic.cnn.com/2011/world/11/29/iran.britain_ties/index.html (accessed 26 March 2012).

⁸⁶British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), “The British Ambassador in Iran (Arabic),” http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/12/111202_british_ambassdor_iran_shtml (accessed 10 May 2012).

Sunnis in Iran has written that: “If we were not able to export our revolution to the neighboring Islamic country, there is no doubt, that the culture of these other countries, which mixed with the influence of western culture, will attack us and win.”⁸⁷

The Iranian Constitution guarantees the principles of “exporting revolution,” which aims to achieve victories for all people who are suppressed by the arrogance of any opposition. The Iranian Constitution also affirms the continuation of the Iranian Revolution at home and abroad; especially in the expansion of its international relations with other Muslim governments in order to build “one nation.”⁸⁸ Thus, Iranian foreign policy is “legitimized” legally (by the Iranian Constitution), politically (by its political structures) and religiously (by the word and motives of its Supreme Leader) in order to achieve objectives; even if they are separate from “good neighborliness” and violate “international laws.”

Iran’s Strategic Goals

Following the mandates of the Iranian Constitution, and actual Iranian political approaches, methods, and influencing factors dating back to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, it is clear that the Iranian government’s most important objectives are constant (despite the changing faces of authority; albeit, the Supreme Leader and-or the President): Iranian objectives since 1979 have been:

⁸⁷Dr. Abdul Rahim Baloch, Association of the Sunnis in Iran, 2000, <http://arabic.rt.com/forum/showthread.php?t=99384> (accessed 7 May 2012).

⁸⁸The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

1. A continuous religious-based system (led by individual scholars) which controls the Iranian Government directly from the top.⁸⁹
2. The export of the Iranian Revolution in order to create Shiite minority groups around the world. The broader approach toward achieving this object is the support of current Shiite minorities (throughout the region and beyond) politically, financially, militarily and via the media. The military export of the Iranian Revolution, which was the preferred method during the wars with Iraq in the 1980s, has been replaced by soft power in the form of cultural more discreet methods beginning in the 1990s. The ultimate goal is the creation of one Islamic State which would exist under the Iranian Constitution.⁹⁰
3. The on-going work to become a dominant regional power in the Arabian Gulf. The influential Iranian politician Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani recently said: “Although Iran in its foreign policy aims globally, its focus is on Central Asia and the Gulf.”⁹¹
4. Iran seeks to gain favorable Islamic public opinion through the adoption of Arab and Islamic issues that support Iranian interests.⁹² The Iranian government does not seek to find solutions to these issues; rather, it seeks to use them as a leveraging instrument against both global and regional powers.

⁸⁹Al Theyabi, *Iran and the Dance of Cancer*.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ali Banuazizi and M. Winter, *The New Geopolitics of central Asia and its Border Lands* (Indiana University Press, 1994), 24.

⁹²Ali Sadiq, *What Do You Know about Hezbollah* (Lebanon: Dar Al Ktaab, 2006).

5. The Iranian government seeks to establish an international system in which Iran can become a permanent member. Its means of accomplishing this has been to pit itself against US hegemony, and rely on the support of China and Russia, while attracting South American countries (particularly Venezuela).⁹³
6. Iran seeks a decreased US presence in the Middle East; in particular, the Gulf Region.⁹⁴ Its means of pursuing this goal have been to back less “westernized” regimes while trying to create pro-Iranian regimes throughout the region.
7. Iran seeks to control global energy corridors that surround the Gulf Region. Currently, Iran controls the Straits of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman, and is currently seeking to establish close relations with Djibouti and Eritrea under the pretext of supporting development projects and military agreements in order to create a military port at the Straits of Bab al-Man Dab.⁹⁵
8. The Iranian government aims to become self-sufficient in everything from food industries to advanced science and technology.
9. Iran seeks a powerful military force capable of supporting Iranian objectives, and deterring the threats from the US and other regional states.

⁹³ Aljazeera.net, “The Triangle, Russian Iranian Venezuelan,” <http://aljazeera.net/wikileaks/pages/3280e0cf-0083-4d5c-9447-53f763069ec3> (accessed 9 May 2012).

⁹⁴ Cable News Network (CNN), “Iran warns US aircraft carrier away from Gulf (Arabic),” <http://arabic.cnn.com/2012/world/1/4/Iran.Strait/index.htm> (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁹⁵ Asharq al Awsat Newspaper, “Iran close relations with Djibouti,” <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?issueno=10992&article=549228> (accessed 2 May 2012).

10. Iran has seriously worked to obtain nuclear weapons in order to continue its goal of dominance over the region, protection of its identity, and exportation of its Revolution globally

The Threat of Iran's Foreign Policy

Iran's foreign policy has been isolated on both the regional and global level since the Iranian Revolution. The change brought about by the Iranian Revolution was radical in every aspect (religious, social and economic), and changed Iranian perceptions of the outside world in terms of sorting out friends and enemies. The Revolution began with severing ties with the US and other Western countries, and then with cutting ties with Arab States (especially those aligned with the West). The succession of cutting ties with Arab States was brought about either by direct Iranian actions or by Arab protests toward Iran's support for opposition parties in those Arab states. The paradigm shift in severed relations with Iran reached its peak with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. The majority of states even today (both in the Region and elsewhere) have severed ties with Iran; however, Iran maintains close ties with Syria, Pakistan and the former Soviet Union.

There were limited periods where Iran was close to openness toward establishing friendly ties with the outside world to the point of establishing limited diplomatic representation. Limited Iranian diplomatic initiatives were put forth following the first Gulf War (with the liberation of Kuwait in 1991) where Iran's main objective was to obtain economic resources and opportunities.

Since that period, Iranian foreign policy trends have shifted toward linking both its economy and culture (Shiism principles) with policy in order to achieve "deliberate" strategic objectives "through permanent ongoing updates to the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, through the replacement of diplomats, and through the establishment of strategic planning centers for international political studies, with a new view of improving a decision-making mechanism for information collection.”⁹⁶ President Mohammad Khatami (an Iranian Reformist) was the prominent figure in this development.

With the overthrow of Iraq (its nemesis) in 2003, Iran seized the initiative in promoting its new foreign policy objectives and took a giant leap forward toward playing a more significant role in the region. Soaring oil prices in the Region certainly lent credibility to Iran’s initiatives; however, the events surrounding its nuclear program caused many countries to sever ties with Iran and back away.

Currently Iran’s foreign policy is in dire straits because the major Iranian decision-making groups are divided. In addition, some of them are not aware of the scale of risks dire surrounding Iranian foreign policy. Mr. Farhang Rajai, a Professor of Political Science at Carleton University in Canada said: “that the theory of *Wilayat al Faqih* adopted in Iran has established a state with two heads (the Supreme Leader and the head of state).”⁹⁷

Economic Strategy in Support of the Threatening Policy

Iran relies on the abundant natural wealth from oil and gas, and has tried to develop its agricultural sector in order to achieve food self-sufficiency. Overall, the State controls all economic activities within Iran and the remainder of economic activities is

⁹⁶Ayad Al-batniji, *The Gulf Views Magazine* # 77, February 2011, <http://www.araa.ae/> (accessed 2 May 2012).

⁹⁷Faisal Noor, “General Features of the Iranian Foreign Policy,” <http://www.fnoor.com/fn0262.htm> (accessed 3 May 2012).

controlled by commercial religious institutions. Rising oil prices in recent years have enabled Iran to retain large reserves of foreign exchange.

According to the US Energy Information Administration, Iran ranks second in the world (after Russia) in natural gas reserves with (8.2) trillion cubic meters.⁹⁸ These reserves help the government ensure that it has plenty of fuel for all modes of transportation for the coming decades. The Iranian government has adopted a strategic program aimed at manufacturing vehicles that use natural gas and less oil so that it can increase its oil exports; the results of which would be more efficient Iranian vehicles and greater oil revenues.

In 2005, the Iranian government began placing many privatization policies under Articles 44 and 45 of the Iranian Constitution; however, President Ahmadinejad stopped the program in part because his government was unable to dominate local market volatility and because of the declining value of the Iranian (Reial).

Iranian Budget Expenditure in Support of the Threatening Ambitions

The Iranian general budget amounted to 347 billion (US) dollars for the Persian year (2011);⁹⁹ with part of the budget being controlled by the Revolutionary Guards, and the rest being measured against the Iranian Gross Domestic Product. President Ahmadinejad has given some important projects to the Revolutionary Guards; these have included projects such as the management of Tehran International Airport and various oil

⁹⁸International Atomic Energy Agency, “Country Analysis Brief,” <http://www.eia.gov/cabs/Iran/pdf.pdf> (accessed 3 April 2012).

⁹⁹Press TV, “The Iranian general budget,” <http://previous.presstv.com/detail.aspx?id=120362§ionid=351020102> (accessed 10 May 2012).

line construction projects. According to the Iranian opposition, a billion dollars was put in a secret item in the budget to cover two items. The first is to support the efforts of Iran to seize the initiative among the Arab Spring. The second is to support certain States in order to bypass economic sanctions. Iran oil revenue during the Presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is estimated at 450 billion (US) dollars, of which only 12 billion goes to the country's reserve fund.¹⁰⁰

Iranian military spending expenses amounted to 11.17 billion (US) dollars in 2010 for those aspects of the military which were deemed “non-confidential.” In addition to military spending, the Iranian government has paid funds to States and terrorist organizations in the region and throughout the world in an effort to buy their loyalties and their political favors. For example, Iran paid 50 million (US) dollars to Malawi (in foreign aid) and hundreds of millions annually to the Comoros, Somalia, Sudan, Congo, Mali and Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and other African countries. The Iranian Regime has also given more than 600 million (US) dollars annually to Sri Lanka, and several billion (US) dollars to pro-Iranian organizations in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and other Central Asian countries. In addition, the Iranian government has given free oil (approximately 290,000 barrel per day) to Syria, along with an additional 5.5 billion (US) dollars to the Syrian Regime as support against the Syrian rebel groups who have provoked the recent Syrian Revolution.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰The Arabia News Channel, Dubai, <http://english.alarabiya.net> (accessed 10 May 2012).

¹⁰¹JP News, “Iranian government has given free oil to Syria, ” <http://www.jpnews-sy.com/ar/news.php?id=28442> (accessed 7 May 2012).

A large percentage of the Iranian people live under the poverty line, and since Iran imports items such as benzene.¹⁰² Building materials, food, and consumer goods at a mere 30 percent of what it needs, many small individual business owners have declared bankruptcy, as have half of the traditional textile industry owners.

Iran's Relations and Intervention in the Arab States for the Period 1979 to 2011

Egypt

Egypt and Iran are two states with differing ideologies and interests. Understandably, the relationship decayed between the two countries as a result of Egypt hosting the ousted Shah Reza back in 1979. Later that year, Iran broke off ties with Egypt after President Sadat signed the Camp David Peace Accord with Israel and recognized the "Sovereign State of Israel." Because Egypt (as a Middle East power broker) can block Iran's influence, Iran seeks to avoid collisions with the Cairo government. The two governments have different views on the issue of Palestine. Egypt has called for a peaceful solution while Iran supports the resistance.

In 1991 (during the first Gulf War and the liberation of Kuwait, the two countries converged. Their relations worsened as a result of Egypt's refusal to allow Iran to intervene in Iraq during the first Gulf War. Later, the Egyptian government arrested a group of 14 people from (all Hezbollah infiltrators) who entered Egypt as part of a larger plot to conduct a variety of attacks within Egypt and to work as Iranian sponsored spies.

¹⁰²Time World, "How Badly Would Sanctions on Gas Imports Hurt Iran?" 30 September 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1926655,00.html> (accessed 6 May 2012).

Following the Egyptian Revolution, the interim Egyptian government welcomed the establishment of good relations with Iran. However, when Egypt supported the Peninsula Shield Forces in Bahrain, Iran returned began a frenzied media exploitation which attacked the interim Egyptian government. Following these events, the Egyptian Intelligence Service captured a group financed by Iran which was trying to provoke discord between various Islamic movements within Egypt.

Beginning in 2011, and for the first time in Egypt's modern history, the Shiite community in Egypt rose up after the Egyptian Revolution and made the demands for the restoration of Shiite temples, and the distribution of books, and scholarships, It also supported a group of Egyptian youth to create a pseudo Revolutionary Guard; calling it "The Egyptian Revolutionary Guard."¹⁰³ This new movement declared that the Islamic Revolution in Iran (and its leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) inspired them to this idea and that they were told that Iranian funding would come to their cause in a similar way that Iranian funding is provided for Hezbollah.

In May 2011, the Iranian government sponsored a group of Al-Qaeda leaders to travel to Egypt and instructed them on certain ways to implement their Iranian agenda in Egypt. The motives were to support Egyptian extremist groups loyal to Iran (including persons sentenced to death in Egypt), and to prey upon the disenfranchised. The Iranian government was trying to exploit the bad economic situation in Egypt following the Revolution by partnering with investors loyal to Iran and by attempting to set up factories in Egypt, and gaining control of closed factories. The Iranian government gave up to

¹⁰³ Almoslim.net, "Egyptian revolutionary guard," <http://almoslim.net/node/158215> (accessed 13 March 2012).

5 billion Egyptian pounds to financially support its backers within Egypt and to better afford themselves commercial access to the Suez Canal through economical (albeit illicit) business routes.¹⁰⁴ Given the recent successes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's 2012 elections, the Iranian government now finds themselves pushing through and "open door."

Syria

Iran and Syria are linked by strong ties dating back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Syria did not support Iraq during the wars against Iran. Syria also hosted the Shiite opposition to Arab States who, funded by Iran, included Shiite figures accused of terrorism. One of these terrorists was a Saudi Shiite residing in Syria who was accused of the Khobar Towers in 1996.¹⁰⁵ Another was the terrorist Imad Moghniyeh, the Director of Hezbollah's operations who charged with attempted murder of the Emir of Kuwait. He too was residing in Syria.¹⁰⁶

Iranian-Syrian cooperation has strengthened in recent years; particularly with the arrival of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, both of whom have preyed upon the vulnerabilities of a newly (Shiite-led) Iraq.

¹⁰⁴<http://www.alanba.com.kw/AbsoluteNMNEW/templates/international2010.aspx?articleid=250326&zoneid> (accessed 1 May 2012).

¹⁰⁵"Jafar Al shwyhat," *Al Riyadh Newspaper*, <http://www.alriyadh.com/2005/12/06/article113300.html> (accessed 9 May 2012).

¹⁰⁶<http://www.iran-press-service.com/ips/articles-2008/february-2008/imad-mughniyeh-hezbollahs-phantom-killed.shtml> (accessed 11 April 2012).

The goals and objectives of both Iran and Syria are equal: to seek completion of the Shiite Crescent in the Middle East (Iran-Iraq-Syria-Hezbollah), to support Hezbollah, to facilitate the movement of al-Qaeda and weapons, and to support the Kurds. These goals and initiatives clearly put pressure on Arab States and the West.

Iran supports Syria commercially, economically and militarily. The Iranian government has supported Syrian efforts to recover the Golan Heights back from Israel. However, many in the region believe that Syria wants to keep the Golan under occupation in order to have room for maneuver beyond the UN occupied zones. Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Fayssal Mekdad has described Iranian-Syrian relations as “strategic,” as both countries have pursued international isolation in order to maintain their security which they feel is threatened by foreign (Western) presence in Iraq or by the Israeli threat.¹⁰⁷ The two countries signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement in mid-June 2006 (this was the first of its kind between any Arab country and Iran).¹⁰⁸

Militarily, Iran has supported the Syrian Regime against the so-called the Arab Spring revolution by sending units of the Mahdi Army in support of Syrian troops, along with military equipment in to enhance Syrian signal intelligence capabilities. Additionally, the Iranian government has given direct financial support to the Syrian

¹⁰⁷peopledaily.com, Strategic Iranian-Syrian relations, <http://arabic.peopledaily.com.cn/31662/6968594.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

¹⁰⁸Elaph.com, Iran–Syria Defense Cooperation Agreement, <http://www.elaph.com/Web/Politics/2009/12/512431.htm> (accessed 10 May 2012).

economy. President Ahmadinejad's statement is very clear when he said: "the security of Syria is the security of Iran."¹⁰⁹

Herein the researcher believes that the relationship between Iran and Syria is not "truly" a strong alliance. Iran's history and motives have proven that Iran will eventually sacrifice Syria in exchange for an agreement with the international community, or in a way that would guarantee the achievement of its own strategic objectives.

Jordan

Iranian and Jordanian relations have been cut since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The worsened when Jordan supported Iraq during its wars with Iran. In the 1990s, relations slowly improved after Iran abandoned the principle of exporting the revolution, and when the Jordanian government consented to close the offices of the Iranian opposition groups. In early 2000, Jordan accused Iran of trying to smuggle weapons through Jordanian territory into Israel (which is deemed a declaration of war under the peace agreement between the two countries, Jordan and Israel).¹¹⁰ The ties collapsed in 2004 when Iran instigated violent extremist acts against the Sunnis in Iraq; which prompted King Abdullah of Jordan to issue stringent warning against the Shiite

¹⁰⁹Kassioun.org, "The security of Iran," <http://kassioun.org/index.php?mode=archivebody&id=74913> (accessed 10 March 2012).

¹¹⁰New Arenas for Iranian-Sponsored Terrorism, The Arab-Israeli Heartland, <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/711/currentpage/29/Default.aspx> (accessed 10 May 2012).

crescent.¹¹¹ For the last four years there has been no Jordanian Diplomatic Mission in Tehran.

Iran has continued to intervene in order to disperse the Palestinian factions and to put pressure on some of them to reject reconciliation with Israel, which contradicts the motives and policies of Jordan. Tensions rose a year ago after President Ahmadinejad stated that Jordan was prone to instability following Jordan's support to Bahrain. In addition, Jordan's distinctively strong relations with the US and the pro-Western countries of the Gulf States are the most important obstacles toward any sort of Iranian-Jordanian relations.

Yemen

Yemen supported the 1979 Iranian Revolution; however, with the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war Yemen supported Iraq and sent volunteers. The relations improved after the end of the war.

In 2004, the warm relations between Iran and Yemen changed as a result of the Houthi rebellion against the Yemeni government (Iran calls the group the "Yemeni Hezbollah"). The Houthi were led by Badr Eddin Al-Houthi, who went to Iran 1997 and following his "indoctrination" changed his doctrine from Zaidi to Jafari. He returned to Yemen and led the rebellion; receiving support from the Iranian Embassy in Sana'a, as well as support from the Shiite in Bahrain, and training from Iraqi Badr forces and Lebanese Hezbollah. The Houthi party was used by Iran (to create conflict in the region)

¹¹¹David J. Jonsson, "Nuclear Proliferation—Options In A Perfect Storm," *Northeast Intelligence Network*, <http://homelandsecurityus.com/archives/109> (accessed 10 May 2012).

and to penetrate the Saudi border. Saudi Arabia fought against the Yemen insurgency inside its own borders.¹¹² Eventually, the Houthi movements withdrew from Saudi Arabia after the destruction of some of their depot sites, and after some of their leaders were killed. During the conflict, the Yemeni Government seized an Iranian vessel (Mahan 1) carrying weapons to support the insurgent movement.¹¹³ Iran also supported Al-Qaeda both on the Arabian Peninsula and in Yemen and facilitated coordination between Al Qaeda and the Houthi movement to provide funds and weapons and exchange of information. The Al-Qaeda commander in the Arabian Peninsula admitted to the Iranian support after he returned to Saudi Arabia (his confessions published in the media).¹¹⁴

The researcher believes that access to Yemen is an Iranian operational goal in an effort to guarantee further access to the Bab al-Mandab and to eventually achieve its strategic objective of controlling global energy traffic and traffic of international maritime pieces.

Lebanon

Lebanon has very good diplomatic relations with Iran. Still there are many Lebanese factions who are divided about how to deal with the Iranian government because they are wary of Iran's intentions. Some see Iran as an important ally in

¹¹²Al Theyabi, *Iran and the Dance of Cancer*.

¹¹³Mutawasset, Iranian vessel (Mahan 1), <http://www.mutawassetonline.com/reports/618--q-q.html> (accessed 11 May 2012).

¹¹⁴YouTube, "Mohammed Al ufi the leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZde51uGL3s> (accessed 11 May 2012).

countering Israel, while others sees Iran meddling in Lebanese internal affairs clearly for the purposes of bargaining with the international and regional States in order to impose its own agenda.

The Iranian established Ammal organization in Lebanon was founded by the Iranian Mussa Sadr, who was later granted Lebanese citizenship, and who is the son-in-law of Khomeini and one of his former students. Ammal fought the Palestinians inside the Palestinian refugee camps (Sabra and Shatila) in Beirut in 1985 while they were under the leadership of Nabih Berri.¹¹⁵ When Khomeini's Deputy (Montazeri) denounced these acts, Khomeini isolated him from his position as vice president. Ammal appointed Khomeini as its leader and created Hezbollah in 1982. Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah today was in this organization back then, while he was studying at Najaf as a student who was on scholarship. Nasrallah is a Shiite extremist and believes in the *Wilāyah Faqih*. As he said: "Iran provided him with all military training and, financial aid."¹¹⁶

Through these two proxies (Ammal and Hezbollah), Iran plays a "Great Game" of its own in the international and regional arena. While it continued to negotiate with Arab and Western countries in ways which serve its own interests, it continues to exploit the support of Ammal and Hezbollah against Israel in order to earn Islamic public support.

¹¹⁵Sadiq, *What Do You Know about Hezbollah*.

¹¹⁶Russia Today, "Iran provides supports to Nasrallah," <http://arabic.rt.com/forum/showthread.php?t=150729> (accessed 8 May 2012).

The “Other” Arab States

Iranian foreign policy typically focused on cooperation with States and political parties not associated with the US and the West. It is also affected by international pressures (Sudan) and economic pressures (Mauritania), and avoids the States which cooperate with Russia and China on economic and military issues (Algeria). Morocco more than once accused Iran of spying on them. Although there is a big difference in the social and religious levels between Iran and other Arab States, there are Shiite minority groups in many Arab countries that represent the links between Arab states and Iranian societies; which the Iranian government exploits in the promotion of its interest at every opportunity.

Iran and the Arab Spring

After the Arab Spring revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, Iranian officials openly supported the revolutions in hopes that it would lead peoples to freedom and Islamic democracy; they strongly supported it in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, and conservatively supported it in Libya because of its opposition to military intervention. However, with the start of the revolution in Syria, Iranian views of this revolution differed and they called the Syrian Revolution an American-Western-Israeli Allied plot with terrorist groups conspiring to overthrow the Government of Syria which is resisting the foreign pressure. The Iranian government then gave all forms of contribution and support to the Syrian government to assist them in thwarting the Syrian revolution.

It is clearly apparent that the Arab Revolutions revealed Iran’s lies, deceit, and its double standards in defending its national interests and not its revolutionary principles as it has so often claimed to do. The fall of Syria would have meant that Iran would have

lost its bridge by which it communicates with the rest of the Arab world as well as its transportation link of sending arms and money to its allies and proxies. Iran's methodologies are mirrored by Hassan Nasrallah (the leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement) who cheated his own people by appearing as a revolutionary trying to free the land, but became a defender of the Syrian regime which sheds the blood of its own people.

The Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that: "The Egyptian Revolution draws strength from the Iranian Revolution."¹¹⁷ The Egyptian street demonstrations rejected the claim and accused him of murdering the demonstrators in Iran and highlighted the fact that Iran was the first regime to fight the peaceful revolution (the Green Revolution), killing demonstrators and imprisoning opposition leaders without trial.

Relations with States having ties to the Gulf States and Iran

Turkey

Iran's relations with Turkey are described as old, conflicted, and bloody between Persians and Turks, in large part because of ideological differences and competition for leadership; however, the relations improved after the 1923 establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Iran has not exported its revolution to Turkey, fearing that Turkey will support the Azeri groups in Iran who seek separation.

Turkey has accused Iran of killing some Turkish writers and intellectuals, but the two countries agreed to fight against the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, and security agreements

¹¹⁷Egypt, Egyptian street demonstrations against Iran, *Al Ahram Newspaper*, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/Print.aspx?ID=61596> (accessed 8 May 2012).

were established between the Ankara and Tehran (after the US supported Iraq's Kurds) in an effort to prevent a Kurdish State from being formed. Turkey needs Iranian gas as a source of energy, thus, Turkey has kept a good relationship with Iran. At the same time, Iran needs Turkey as a strategic link with the West (Turkey has served as a mediator in resolving western concerns about the Iranian Nuclear Program; particularly with Iranian-Venezuelan joint ventures).

Still the two states (Iran and Turkey) differ on a variety of issues, such as their relations with Israel (Turkey has diplomatic relations with Israel while Iran seeks its complete destruction and denies Israel's right to exist). Turkey also rejects Iran's intervention in Iraq, and supports Azerbaijan, while Iran backs Georgia in the conflict between the two countries. Iran fears the separation of the territory of the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, which may strengthen the Azeri separatist movements in northern Iran. Ankara and Tehran also have different views of the Syrian Revolution, where Turkey seeks to help resolve the uprising, Iran attempts to control this and all of the Arab Revolutions in order to serve their own interests.

Iran considers Turkey's deployment of NATO radar systems belonging to the missile shield project in eastern Turkey as an action directed against Iran and a direct threat to its security. Turkey's Ambassador to the US said in an interview with the Christian Science Monitor that: "Turkey would never accept the existence of a nuclear bomb in neighboring Iran."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸Howard LaFranchi, "Turkey: Materials likely destined for Iran nuclear program seized," *The Christian Science Monitor*, http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/monitor_breakfast/2011/1208/Turkey-Materials-likely-destined-for-Iran-nuclear-program-seized-video (accessed 10 May 2012).

Pakistan

Iran continued its ties and communication with Pakistan after the Iranian Revolution. The two countries have a major strategic relationship as they relate to a common border, share cultural linkages, and find tribal and religious commonalities in the Shiite minorities who dwell in Pakistan. Nevertheless, there are significant security problems along their border which result from the instability caused by the Baluch Sunni tribes in Baluchistan who have rebelled against the Shiite groups in Iran.

The two countries share an interest in Afghanistan in large part because of the US military presence on their borders. Pakistan played a significant role in Tehran's ability to obtain the centrifuges for their nuclear reactors through the confessions of the father of the Pakistani Nuclear Program, Abdul Qadeer Khan. Pakistan believes that there are no Iranian intentions to develop nuclear weapons. Commercially, the two countries signed a natural gas pipeline agreement with the support of China.

There are some who consider the communication between Pakistan and Iran to be the result of the constant threat of the US toward Pakistan; where American carries the "big stick." Such a notion has led Pakistan seek access to regional alliances in order to ensure support in case American forces stay in Afghanistan beyond 2011.¹¹⁹

India

Iran seeks cooperation with India in the form of huge economic projects in the energy industry in order to benefit from the technological advances of Asian countries

¹¹⁹Huda Husseini, "America Big Stick," *Middle East News Paper*, 10 November 2011.

and to open up new markets for its products. India considers Iran to be an important source of energy.

Currently India is the sixth largest consumer of energy in the world and wants to find a market for its petroleum companies in the Iranian gas industry.¹²⁰ In return, Iran wants to obtain Indian technical advancement in the communication fields and development of old Russian weapons and programs concerning satellite technology. The two countries are also involved in building a future rail line from Moscow to Iran (Persian Gulf) and to India via Central Asia.

Despite the cooperative business and technology initiatives, India voted against Iran at the IAEA in order to preserve its relations with the international community. As a result of this vote, Iran stopped the shipments of oil to India in 2011; however, Saudi Arabia compensated India for its losses.

European Union

Iran approaches the European Union (EU) on two fronts; namely, Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

Eastern Europe: Iran's foreign policy focuses on economic cooperation and supports any and all policies which oppose Western Europe.

Western European: Iran pursues a pragmatic strategy in order to achieve its goals. In some cases there is cooperation in order to ease pressure on its nuclear program and initiatives; however, in most cases, Iran refuses to cooperate with Western Europe.

¹²⁰Consumer Energy Alliance, "India boasts a growing economy," <http://consumerenergyalliance.org/energy-around-the-world/india/> (accessed 15 March 2012).

South America

Iran's foreign policy toward South American focuses on countries not associated with the US; these include Cuba and Venezuela. Iran seeks to coordinate oil policies within OPEC and to find South American outlets for its economy. Iran (through its Hezbollah proxy) enjoys extensive networked relations in South America.¹²¹

Strategic Analysis of the threatening Ambitions of Iran's Government

An analysis of Iranian principles, motives, and actions reveal their threatening intentions.

Revolutionary Principles

One of Khomeini's discourses reads: "we are facing the world ideologically." Therefore, Iranian relations are based on their revolutionary principles, and it is supported by a list of beliefs, ethnic differences, and historical problems (chapter 1). Thus, it is quite difficult to overcome.

Religion

The employment of the religious factors to justify its policy of exporting its revolution and its ambitions to the rest of the Islamic countries is substantiated on the basis that the peoples of these countries are under the influence of non-religious rulers. The goal of exporting the revolution is the acquiescence of political systems in the Muslim world for Iranian interests and a commitment to reorient Iranian foreign affairs.

¹²¹Nawf Ayad Al-Otabi, Iran (study presented to Saudi's Command General and Staff College).

Ambitious Policies

Iran is pursuing ambitious policies at the regional level based on communal problems. At the core of these issues is the Iranian Intelligence Agency which is closely linked to Iranian National Security Council. By ambitiously preying on Shiite minorities in the region, the Iranian government has created a groundswell of groups who look to oppose their original governments.

Bolstering Shiite Loyalty

The strengthening of parties loyal to Iran, through the exploitation of Shiite minorities in Arab and Islamic countries, serve as factors to support Iranian policies. Further, these support groups (with proper Iranian training and support) could (and have) easily transition to field units (proxies) ready for use in creating trouble in their native states and supporting Iranian (Shiite) ambitions.

Links to Al Qaeda

Iran has invested in ties with Al-Qaeda by lending money and weapons, and by harboring them to extend its influence. Iran seeks to pick its fruit in places like Yemen, Egypt and other States, and it depends on Al Qaeda to do its work in countries where the role of the Shi'a is weak.

Oil

High oil prices have increased Iran's foreign currency reserves. These factors have made many analysts argue that the Iranian economy is supporting its influence in South America, south Asia and Africa in order to increase its overall revenues while finding bases of support (and inroads) outside the Arabian Peninsula.

Exporting the Revolution

Exporting the Iranian Revolution to Arab States began immediately after the revolution and was done via direct military action and financial support. The exportation was weakened in the mid-1980s after Arab and western military and political confrontations where Iran found itself as the loser.

In the second period of the Iranian Revolution, the export method adopted was via “softer” approach. Iran created cultural centers, scholarships, book exhibitions, restoration of shrines, support of Shiite in Arab States for seasonal celebrations, and sent cheap labor so that the Shiites would have human and economic opportunities. President Rafsanjani clearly hoped that Saudi Arabia would rely on Iranian manpower and goods.

Media

Iran’s campaign (soft power) controls newspapers, internet sites, and satellite broadcasting (around 12 channels) owned by Iran to broadcast materials in Arabic which criticize and attack Arab State policies and defend Iran’s loyalists (El-Alam TV).

Movements and Organizations

The creation of movements and organizations, along with Shiite parties linked to Iran financially and intellectually has helped Iran to export its interests. These groups, trained in Iran and Syria as democratic opposition parties’ form within their countries a means of pressure on Arab Governments for the intended purposes of promoting Iranian strategies.

Circumventing the Arab League

Iran's circumvention of the Arab League, while trying to control Arab States and parties that have problems with the West has illustrated its intended motives. Iran has offered economic support to Shiite groups Shiite, and has condoned activities in Sudan, Somalia, and Mauritania.

Iranian Threats

The continuation of Iran's serious threats toward "direct action" and further intervention into Arab Affairs is cause for great concern. When Iranian President Ahmadinejad said: "We will fill the vacuum in Iraq in case US forces withdrew,"¹²² there is a clear message that Iran seeks upon any and all "targets of opportunity" for the promotion of its interests. Again, this can be seen in its President's remarks about opposing intervention of a Peninsula Shield Forces in Bahrain.

The Impact of Iran's Ambitions on the International Security Environment

Iran has used all means and methods available to destabilize the security of the international security environment following the principles of the Iranian Revolution and the Iranian Constitution. These principles and guiding documents provide the religious and legal justification for their actions. The Iranian leadership is seeking to make the region unstable by cooperating with other outside players who have similar own agendas regarding the US and global energy. A closer examination of actual Iranian interventions

¹²²On Press Conference in Tehran on 28 August 2007.

in the affairs of other states will illustrate Iranian revolutionary export on the basis of its Constitution and religious principles.

Iranian Political Theory on International Environmental

The fundamental basis for Iranian thought in linking history with politics stems from the fact that historical Shiite doctrine is based on political doctrine which was originally used by the Safavids against the Sunni Ottomans. Shiite doctrine regarded all civilian rulers as those who rob political power from the twelfth Imam (Mahdism), and that it requires patience in awaiting the advent of Mahdi. The Iranian government is using this practice at the moment as a way of ensuring it protects its ideological, political and military capabilities.

Iranian President Ahmadinejad continues talking of the absence of Imam and his return ever since taking office in 2005. He sees his personal role in setting the stage for the return of the absent Imam. In a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2005, Ahmadinejad talked about the absent Imam in verbose detail, which puzzled the diplomatic audience because of his legendary talk. Therefore, the Iranian Republic considers itself the most qualified state in applying the teachings of Islam in the region, and that it is Iran's responsibility to fight the oppressors and to repudiate them into supporting the oppressed and to ally with them.¹²³ This position is supported through Iran's policy of exporting the Islamic Revolution from an Iranian perspective, a position it has used to build strategic long-term policies since 1979. "Iran has always believed that

¹²³A. Savyon and Y. Mansharof, *The Doctrine of Mahdism, In the Ideological and Political Philosophy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Mesbah-e Yazdi*, Inquiry and Analysis, May (Washington, DC: Middle East Media Research Institute, 2007).

the political borders of the Islamic state are beyond its actual borders as a nation . . . the actual dimensions are beyond the current borders of the Islamic Republic.”¹²⁴

In a statement on the first anniversary of the Iranian Revolution on 11 February 1980, the Supreme Leader (Khomeini) said: “We work on exporting our revolution to various parts of the world.”¹²⁵ This famous sentence uttered by Khomeini became the source of Iranian contemporary thought after the elimination of the Shah and the transfer point where Iran officially became the Islamic Republic.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on the 13th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran said: “this revolution took place in Iran, but it is not confined to the Iranian border.”¹²⁶ Hence, Iranian policies allow the regime a great deal of flexibility in establishing strong ties with extremist and revolutionary organizations outside of Iran. The policies allow Iran to support them as long as they are moving in the direction that helps the success of the Iranian strategy in areas which pursue Iranian interest whether these organizations operate inside of or outside of international legitimacy.

Intervals in Iranian Politics (Revolutionary Phases)

Ayatollah Khomeini (1979 to 1989) and
Hashemi Akbar Rafsanjani (1989 to 1997)

Upon arriving in power, Khomeini’s regime removed the influence of the loyalists to the West and largely eliminated the Army and the Secret Intelligence Service.

¹²⁴Mana Saleh, *the Ideological Dimension in Saudi–Iranian*, 224-225.

¹²⁵Imam-Khomeini Official Website, <http://imam-khomeini.com/DefaultN.aspx?lang=ar> (accessed 10 May 2012).

¹²⁶Ahmadinejad Official Website, <http://www.ahmadinejad.ir/fa/> (accessed 10 May 2012).

Khomeini took advantage of the Iraqi war with help of hardcore forces to isolate the moderate forces from participating in political decision-making and from having complete control of the power.

The key features of the first phase included political hostility against the west (particularly the US and Arab States who were aligned with the West), adopting a policy based on connections with third world countries, and supporting Shiites in the world in order to strengthen their positions and follow radical policies toward the Arab States.

Meanwhile, Iran adopted the Palestinian issue as a way to win the Muslims' public support (the government was not involved in the Palestinian issues in order to help find a solution; rather it was an issue that Iran wanted to use to exploit Israel and the West). Khomeini gave priority to ideological and political behaviors in state formation and explained his thoughts in his book *Islamic Government*. He also started, through the revolutionary committees, to export the revolution to neighboring countries. He said: "as long as Iran believed that its Islamic State boundaries are beyond the state's political boundaries it will stay a strong country."¹²⁷ Khomeini died on 3 June 1989, and on 4 June 4 1989, the Expert Council approved the appointment of Ali Khamenei as his successor in the post of guardian jurist and Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This appointment emphasized adherence to Khomeini's policy and his teachings and pledged that by applying it, it also meant the continuation of Iranian politics despite institutional and personal changes.¹²⁸

¹²⁷Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist (Iranian constitution).

¹²⁸Arab Strategic Report (Cairo: Center for Political and Strategic Studies Al-Ahram, 1992), 143.

On July 30, 1989, Ali Hashimi Rafsanjani became Iran's President. As President, he stressed the continuing curriculum of Khomeini's intellectual and political ideology with changes on the applications of taking into account poor internal Iranian conditions, which require exiting from isolation and communicating with the world for economic aims.¹²⁹ In the 1990s, Iran opened up regionally with the Central Asian Republics, the GCC states, Turkey, and with Europe. The foreign policy of Rafsanjani's Government was a mix between ideological goals and pragmatism and benefited greatly from Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, which was the foundation for the emergence of the reformist stream.

This stage was characterized by the war with Iraq, and by cutting ties with a large number of states, as well as the establishment of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Kuwait and the establishment of other groups linked to the Iranian regime in many other countries. In addition, this phase was also characterized by ceasing the Iranian nuclear program in an attempt to win sympathy from the international community and to seek an opportunity to "softly" export the Iranian Revolution export.

President Khatami (1997 to 2005)

The period under the rule of President Mohammad Khatami is the stage where Iran shifted from the state of revolution to the State of Iran. Iran confirmed that it could not cause a radical political change in the region and focused on domestic conditions and improved its relations with the GCC States.

¹²⁹Mehdi Shehadeh and Jawad Bishara, *Iran: The challenges of faith and revolution* (Center of Arabian, European Studies, 1999), 101.

Foreign policy in this phase was balanced internally, and externally Iran sought openness and looked for way to remove tensions. President Khatami invited the idea of the construction of a project (the great Islamic Middle East), that was based on democracy, development and respect for the dignity of the peoples of the region, but he could not start the project, simply because it interfered with revolutionary principles.¹³⁰

The difference marked by this phase (as opposed to the previous phase) was the creation of a gap between the old guard of the Islamic regime and the reformists who represented one third of the people. As such, there began a conflict between President Khatami and his supporters (reformists) against the Revolutionary Guards which cost Khatami his position. President Khatami took advantage of improved relations with neighbors and the international community by accelerating the work on the Iranian nuclear program; using both outside resources and technology to assist with the program's progression. In spite of the disagreements between conservative and reformers with Iran, both still agreed to continue with the nuclear program (in pursuit of their desired ends), despite differences in the ways and means each group sought in achieving them.

Current President Ahmadinejad (2005 to the Present)

The period under the leadership of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad follows the course of escalation and evasion and sometimes sporadic confrontations with the West regarding Iran's nuclear program. President Ahmadinejad has thrived on exploiting international and regional situations (Iraq, Afghanistan, and the world economic crisis).

¹³⁰“Interview Mohammad Khatami,” *Al-Hayat Newspaper*, 6 August 2005, www.daralhayat.com (accessed 4 December 2011).

The confrontations with Europe and America led to economic sanctions being imposed on Iran; however, due to the complexity of Western interests, as well as the Russian and Chinese positions at the UN Security Council, Iran still enjoys limited freedom to tolerate the economic effects of the sanctions.¹³¹

During this phase, Iran played a key role in the fall of Iraq and still strongly supports the political sectarianism inside Iraq while continuing their destructive interferences in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Syria, and Lebanon as a way to leverage against the international community. The Ahmadinejad Presidency is marked by Iranian isolation from virtually the entire world. It is riddled with the problems of unemployment and inflation, declining services, and marked increases in the number of poor people; many of them who had voted for Ahmadinejad, now find themselves living below the poverty line. Still, the delusions of many Iranian leaders emphasize regional political leadership and a desire to dominate Gulf security, and control the international energy sources, by virtue of using all ways and means in order to achieve these goals (ends).

The Case Studies

Iran is seeking to Influence the international community and become a key player in building regional and international links and alliances.

Afghanistan

Considered a place of permanent concern to Iran, Afghanistan, throughout its history, seized parts of Iran and then later Iran returned and controlled parts of

¹³¹Takyh, *Hidden Iran*, 65.

Afghanistan. There are trans-boundary ethnic relationships which exist (such as Baluch, Tajik, Hazara and the Shia) which extends into the western regions of Afghanistan.

The presence of more than 2 million Iranian refugees along the border (more than 900 km) played a major role in supporting loyalists to Iran against the Soviet troops until the withdrawal in February 1989. Following the withdrawal, Iran was angered and objected to the exclusion of its allies from ruling in Afghanistan and opposed the transitional government. Later it returned support to Dr. Mohammed Najibullah's Soviet installed government in Kabul, and actually supported Shia parties during the Afghan Civil War following the fall of the Najibullah's government.¹³²

After the arrival of the Taliban, the relationship turned bad to a point where it reached the build-up forces on the borders in 1998. Thereafter, Iran sought to overthrow the Taliban government because of ideological differences and fears of Taliban support to the more radical Sunni Islamic groups in the Central Asia states. Thus, Iran supported the Northern Alliance (the major resistance group who opposed the Taliban in Afghanistan) after 9/11; Iran supported the US despite fears of being encircled by the West (US forces in Afghanistan, and the presence of US and NATO forces in the Gulf and Central Asian states). Meanwhile, Iran began to interfere in the tribal areas of western Pakistan (in the Pashtun areas) to gather intelligence and to form new alliances against US. Iran has continued to keep ties with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and has also approved arms

¹³²“Iran supported Shia parties during the Afghan Civil War,” <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=656786&eid=7986> (accessed 19 April 2012).

shipments to these two organizations which represent new markets for weapons and field testing of Iranian Improvised Explosive Devices.¹³³

Iran's proposed assistance plans for Afghanistan, which were approved by the UN and International Security Assistance Force, are larger and more structured than other nations' plans. They are concentrated in western Afghanistan, which makes for a natural extension of Iran with regard to language, Shiism, economic connections, societal and cultural, as well as political, security, and military thoughts.¹³⁴ The Iranian Councilor in Afghanistan said: "Iranian exports to Afghanistan rose from 400 million (US) dollars to 1 billion (US) dollars; an average of 600 million (US) dollars annually."¹³⁵

Iranian goals in the Afghan theater are to:

1. Achieve its higher strategic objective of diverting the attention from itself and projecting toward the US, while exhausting US forces by making them operate over stretched areas in their pursuit of Iranian-backed factions who opposed the Afghan government.

2. Make the western region of Afghanistan a natural extension of Iran and a buffer zone for enhancing Iranian security.

3. Act as the protector of the interests of China, Russia, and India within Afghanistan.

4. Allow Al-Qaeda to use its territory to transit from Afghanistan to Iraq (and back and forth).

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵<http://www.irna.ir/ARIndex.htm> (accessed 19 April 2012).

5. Seek economic opportunities in Afghanistan by making it the largest market for Iranian low quality, cheap goods.

6. Find a direct route to China and India as large new energy consumers; thus Afghanistan is the shortest way to these markets.

7. Use Afghan Refugees to put pressure on the Afghan and US governments to make political deals by threatening to expel them from Iran to Afghanistan (which is not ready for more people).

8. Flood Afghanistan with Afghan Refugees who have converted to support the Iranian policies that they were taught in Iranian schools.

9. Increase the number of Iranian Imams in Afghanistan in order to teach Iranian religious doctrine (Shiism).

Iraq

Iraq poses other concerns for Iran greatly influences Iran's internal and external events. Throughout its history, Iraq has been a game board for Iranian conflicts. The Persian-Roman wars accrued on Iraq's territory, while the Islamic conquests came through Iraq. The Persian-Ottoman wars occurred on Iraqi's lands (Baghdad and Mosul). The last invasion by the British Army (during the Anglo-Afghan War) was through both Afghanistan and Iraq. The Iran-Iraq war lasted a decade. Finally, the US, the enemy of the Iranian Revolution is now in Iraq (and Afghanistan).

The Iranians are proficient readers of military history. Iran blames Iraq and Afghanistan for all its historical problems with invaders. Therefore, Iran sees the US (and Western presence) in Iraq as a beginning to an invasion of Iran, whether military or cultural, through the dissemination of Western democracy, which if successful, would

overthrow the autocracy of Khamenei and the clergy (both conservatives and reformers) who believe, that Khamenei is the supreme power.

Iraq is a prominently influencing, Arab state, and is also influenced by other Arab States (the eastern entrance) as well. Iraq is also an important global energy source; overlooking the Persian Gulf and close to the Iranian reactors. Therefore, the researcher believes that Iran will attempt highlight the ways by which Iran has, and will continue to interfere in Iraq as part of its export of the Iranian Revolution.

Immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein's Government, Iran sent some organizations to Iraq, the most famous being the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, which included eight political, religious, and military organizations (Badr Corps). The group was comprised of around 10,000 men and backed by funds to buy apartments and houses in Basra, Najaf, and Karbala, for the provisions of assistance and loans for Iraqis.¹³⁶

Iran also sent a number of Ayatollahs and Hojatollahs to present religious references of Iranian origin in order to implement these programs in Iraq in the religious institutions. . . . Iran now tries to support Ayatollah Al Shahrudi as a successor to the sick Sistani, and if chosen, he will have complete control over religious affairs and fatwa in Iraq that will force Iraq to completely follow Iranian laws and policies. Al Shahrudi has the strong support of Prime Minister Al-Maliki because Al Shahrudi is a member of Al-Maliki's party; thereby giving Al-Maliki will have religious and political control over Iraq.¹³⁷

¹³⁶Akherisa Mohammed and others, a Study on Iran (presented to the Command General and Staff College in Jordan, 2009).

¹³⁷Ibid.

Iran sent hundreds of students and clergy as representatives of the Supreme Leader to Najaf and Karbala, where party were organized to cooperate with Iran within the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq as a means to strengthen political presence, and to influence the military and security situations in Iraq through cooperation with the Badr Corps.

The Iranian Embassy in Baghdad serves as a center for Iranian operations and management. Additionally, the appointment of officers of the Revolutionary Guard as ambassadors gives Iran direct control of General Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the Quds Force. General Petraeus last year told the War Institute for the Study, about the problem Suleimani posed to him: “Now, that makes diplomacy difficult if you think that you’re going to do the traditional means of diplomacy by dealing with another country’s ministry of foreign affairs because in this case, it is not the ministry. It is a security apparatus.”¹³⁸

Iran’s support of loyal members of the Revolutionary Guards gives them access to ministerial posts and important centers of interest (Hadi al-Ameri, became a deputy to Al-Maliki and was one who was suspected for the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996).¹³⁹

¹³⁸The Guardian, “Qassem Suleimani: The Iranian general ‘secretly running’ Iraq,” 28 July 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/28/qassem-suleimani-iran-iraq-influence> (accessed 27 March 2012).

¹³⁹Fox News, “Terror Attack Victim ‘Sick’ Over Iraqi Minister Hadi al-Ameri’s Visit to White House,” 16 December 2011, <http://foxnewsinsider.com/2011/12/16/terror-attack-victim-sick-over-iraqi-minister-hadi-al-ameris-visit-to-white-house/> (accessed 5 May 2012).

Iran has supported of all acts of violence based on ethnic or sectarian divisions and has fostered the spread of drugs in Iraq. It has also sponsored bombings of some Shi'a holy sites in order to accuse the Sunni factions.

While planning with Syrian intelligence, Iran has allowed the passage of some Arab fighters (non-Syrians) from Syria to Iraq for the purpose of executing suicide bomber missions inside Iraq.

Lastly, Iran has eliminated all those opposed to Iranian activities in Iraq, either directly or by use of the Mahdi Army and Quds Force. One incident occurred after the US troops left Iraq. The Iranian backed forces killed the Sunni leaders of the Iraqi awakening movements, and fabricated the charges. As such many of nationalist Iraqis (whether Sunni or Shiite) were accused of terrorism and imprisoned in order to prevent any sort of strong opposition against the Iraqi regime loyal to Iran (Dawa party). On 19 December 2011, just after the departure of the US Army forces, the Vice President of Iraq, Tariq al-Hashimi (a Sunni), was accused of orchestrating the bombing attacks.¹⁴⁰

Strategic Analysis

The world's trends may change in the foreseeable future against the interests of Iran once the world arrives at the conclusion that Iran produces nuclear weapons and poses a threat to the security of the region and to global energy. Iran's trends and actions have included:

¹⁴⁰*The New York Times*, "Tariq al-Hashimi," http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/h/tariq_al_hashimi/index.html (accessed 9 May 2012).

1. The Iranian decision-making process, which is directed toward the international environment, is complicated because of the participation of several Iranian organizations (Iranian National Security Council, Expediency Council, Revolutionary Guard Corps, Intelligence, Religious Affairs, and the Office of the Ayatollah Khamenei).

2. Iran has used money and weapons to create religious and nonreligious organizations inside Iraq and Afghanistan for the implementation of Iranian agendas and to create instability beyond their own borders.

3. Iran wants to make the Iraqi government a political and religious system that is directly linked to it; fearing the rise of secular or federal systems because this form of government would raise the ethnic minorities in Iran (Arabs, Kurds, Azeris, and Baluch).

4. The Iranians are good readers of military history. As such, the Iranian leadership has decided to dominate Iraq in order to impede the development and modernization of projects that might impose Iranian influences; keeping Iraq weak and ineffective in the region.

5. Its two neighboring states (Iraq and Afghanistan) were the sources of war on Iran and the gates for foreign invasions and conquests. Iranian historians refuse to forget the history that these two nations represent; namely, the strategic first line of defense for Iran and its Government. This explains why Iran has focused its efforts for control of each.

6. Iran has supported the US clandestinely in an effort to topple hostile governments to Iran (the Taliban, Saddam's Iraq). The statement by Mr. Abtahi (Khatami's Assistant) confirmed that: "without Iran, Baghdad and Kabul wouldn't have

fallen” without the support of Shiite militia in Iraq and the withdrawal of officers and Shi’ite Iraqi army personnel as the US forces progressed.¹⁴¹

7. Iran moved its battle against US to Iraq by deploying its militias and Al-Quds Corps with the intended purpose to drain and wear out the US Army, and to seek the destruction of the US development efforts. These Iranian forces managed to dominate Iraqi security forces, the National Guard, the Ministries of the State, and created an information deception operation of the US being hostile to Sunnis as a point of confrontation between the US and its allies in Iran.¹⁴²

8. Iran exploited the strategic errors that occurred during the Bush administration in Iraq; such as disbanding the Iraqi Army. The Sunni leaders and the Christian leaders who possessed military and management experience were not protected. This made them vulnerable to sectarian attacks that facilitated the process for Al-Quds Corps members and the loyalists to Iran’s military to take over the high military and civic positions within Iraq.

9. In Afghanistan, the US Administration fought against all associate members of the Taliban, both hardliners and moderates, in an effort to keep the Pashtuns away. Since the Pashtuns represent the largest part of the Afghan society, Iran supports them in an effort to be able to impose its own agenda on them.

¹⁴¹DD-Sunnah, “Fallen of Baghdad and Kabul,” <http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=27404> (accessed 3 May 2012).

¹⁴²Mokhallad Mubaidin, GCC-Iran, from 1997 to 2006.

10. The fall of Taliban and Saddam regimes, the former enemies of Iran, led to the achievement of Iran's strategic objectives and has enhanced Iranian national security on its largest borders.

11. Iran played the role of the champion and savior by creating an image of itself as the protector of the oppressed from the US in the Middle East; citing the US destruction of Muslim States and its continued support for Israel.

12. Iran feels that it is being targeted directly, and will possibly be the next target if the Americans achieve their objectives in Iraq. In this context some analysts note that the advent of an Iraqi regime loyal to the US could easily help Washington overthrow the Iranian regime.

13. On the admission of captured Al Qaeda leaders, Iran has provided safe havens and built relationships with some of Al-Qaeda (the Afghan Arabs) in an effort to make them able and fully-prepared to work for Iran in their states (referring to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan).¹⁴³

14. Iran had gained almost complete control of trade over southern Iraq and western Afghanistan; using them as a key corridor to escape from the economic embargos.

The Nuclear Energy Program is Supporting Nuclear Weapons

Iran's nuclear program raises huge amounts of uncertainty and controversy between Iran the US, Israel and many European countries. Iran insists that the nuclear program falls completely within peaceful uses for producing nuclear energy. The US and

¹⁴³YouTube, "Mohammed Al ufi the leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZde51uGL3s> (accessed 11 May 2012).

Israel have confirmed that Iran aims to acquire nuclear weapons. These suspicions, which were confirmed by the last report of IAEA, could lead to critical strategy implications in the Middle East, Arab states, Turkey, and other regional powers are watching the situation carefully.

Developments of the Iranian Nuclear Program

First Stage

The first stage of the Iranian Nuclear Program is the growth and establishment of the infrastructure during the period 1968 to 1978. The start of the program began during the reign of the last Shah of Iran. The interest in nuclear power was part of the Shah's efforts to transform Iran into a regional superpower. Beginning of 1970s, the Shah founded the Organization of Nuclear Energy, and made an agreement with the US and other Western countries, to establish large-scale nuclear reactors. In 1979, when the Islamic Revolution took over in Iran, the Shah's regime had already invested about 6 billion (US) dollars in the construction of nuclear facilities. The German companies involved in the construction had completed the infrastructure for one reactor at the Bushehr complex.

Second Stage

The second stage was marked by indifference or Iranian apathy toward nuclear power following the Iranian Revolution until the mid-1980s. During this period, revolutionary leaders led by Ayatollah Khomeini took a negative attitude toward nuclear energy. Additionally, the US, Germany and other Western countries refused to cooperate with Iran in the nuclear fields, and imposed a blanket ban in all areas of armament.

Further, the Iraqi air bombing campaign and missile employment during the war against Iran's nuclear facilities was effective and delayed the program for several years.

The Third Stage

The third stage reveals Iran's partial interest (1985 to 1991). The nuclear program during this period began to receive more momentum. The government strengthened the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization and provided new funds to the Amir Abad Center. It also created new nuclear research center at the University of Isfahan in 1984 with some assistance from France. After the Iran-Iraq war, great activity was noticed in the nuclear field and Iran relied heavily on both Russia and China. However, this cooperation was only after cooperation with Western Europe failed.

The Fourth Stage

The fourth stage is characterized by an intense interest in nuclear power during the 1990s. The nuclear program had been made intensive activity in all areas, with the Iranian government pouring enormous funding into building adequate infrastructure necessary to conduct advanced nuclear research. It is well known in the Arab world that the Sharif University of Technology in Tehran is the cradle of the Iranian nuclear program. Some sources have indicated that the nuclear activities transferred from the university after being observed by the experts, and after fears of the possibility of air attack. At present, Bushehr is considered as the main stronghold for the Iranian Nuclear Program. Iran has tried to take advantage of the disintegrating condition that hit the Central Asian republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to obtain nuclear weapons.

Iran's nuclear policies are moving in the context of a complex set of motivations and intentions, some of which are declared and others which are not declared; however, Iranian officials always stress that the nuclear program falls only within the framework of the desire to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy (this message is for the outsider). Although some Iranian leaders have stated loud and clear that the obvious interest is the production of nuclear weapons (this message is for Iranians).

It has become almost certain at the international level, that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. The expert discussions at the present time are beyond the stage of whether Iran is 'seeking' nuclear weapons, to a higher stage of whether Iran is "producing" nuclear weapons. Many political theorists have begun to study how Iran would use the nuclear weapons in the future. Some also consider that the world should negotiate with Iran due to the difficulty of military action at this advanced stage of Iranian nuclear production.

Strategic Analysis

1. It is clear that the Iran-Iraq war created radical changes in Iran's strategic thinking in general and in particular, the nuclear field. Iran's strategic thinking has focused heavily on the lessons learned from the Iraq-Iran war and the US-Israeli threats to Iran, thus, it seeks to prepare for any potential aggression in the future.

2. The Iranian Nuclear Command found that the revitalization of the nuclear program is vital; thus, Iran had carried out a lot of activities relating to the design of weapons and fuel cycles needed to make nuclear weapons. "Iran is pursuing a uranium enrichment program and other projects that could provide it with the capability to

produce bomb-grade fission material and develop nuclear weapons within the next several years.”¹⁴⁴

3. Economic motives-Iran claims that the nuclear program aims to secure 20 percent of its electricity by nuclear material in order to reduce the consumption of gas and oil. However, the objectives referred to do not seem logical. The reactors cost billions of dollars which in an of themselves is not a great benefit in economic terms for a country like Iran, which has a huge stockpile of oil and natural gas that can be used to generate electricity at a cost of no more than 18 to 20 percent of the cost of nuclear electricity. Moreover, Iran has focused on the establishment of nuclear reactors in one area (south of the country) away from the Iranian cities and industrial plants in the north of the country, which reduces the possibility of making use of these reactors to generate power and increases the costs of connectivity.¹⁴⁵

4. The development of Iran’s nuclear capabilities falls within an integrated program for the reconstruction of the Iranian armed forces. Its greater importance is to support Iran’s foreign policy in order to obtain a privileged position in the international arena by dominating Gulf security and by controlling global energy sources. Therefore, nuclear weapon provides a very important tool in strengthening Iran’s position, both regionally and internationally.

¹⁴⁴Arms Control Association, “Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance,” <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat> (accessed 3 May 2012).

¹⁴⁵Dr. Riad Al Rawi, *Iran’s Nuclear Program and its Impact on the Middle East* (Syria: Al Oa’al, 2006).

5. Iran always evades commitments to the international community and has continually refused to permit an independent forum to inspect its nuclear facilities. The IAEA General Director Yukiya Amano said: “Intensive efforts were made to reach agreement on a document facilitating the clarification of unresolved issues in connection with Iran’s nuclear program, particularly those relating to possible military dimensions. Unfortunately, an agreement was not reached on this document.”¹⁴⁶

6. Iran’s astronomical sites have an effect for playing a vital role in the production of nuclear weapons. The abundance of unpopulated areas in Iran provides safe places for the construction of nuclear installations, and the testing of nuclear weapons.

7. Iran’s nuclear facilities are distributed in the depths of Iranian territory, under the mountains and surrounded by military bases for protection and experimental needs. Although Iran has not fully labeled all of its nuclear facilities (such as the Fordow Reactor near Qom), many have been reported to the IAEA by the opposition-People’s Mujahedin of Iran. Iran refuses to cooperate in the inspection of military bases. IAEA General Director Yukiya Amano said: “It is disappointing that Iran did not accept our request to visit Parchin during the first or second meetings.”¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the number of nuclear facilities is relatively large and exceeds the needs of a country in the size of Iran. If such nuclear facilities were being used only for peaceful energy not only would they be open to inspections, but also fully accessible. (See the nuclear location’s map at figure 3).

¹⁴⁶International Atomic Energy Agency, “IAEA Expert Team Returns from Iran,” <http://iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/2012/prn201205.html> (accessed 3 April 2012).

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

8. The IAEA Director General's Report on 8 November 2011 in Article 43 reported that the information indicates that Iran has carried out the following activities that are relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device:

- Efforts, some successful, to procure nuclear related and dual use equipment and materials by military related individuals and entities.
- Efforts to develop undeclared pathways for the production of nuclear material.
- The acquisition of nuclear weapons development information and documentation from a clandestine nuclear supply network.
- Work on the development of an indigenous design of a nuclear weapon including the testing of components.¹⁴⁸

9. In Article 7 of IAEA Report it reads: "Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities in the following declared facilities; all of which are nevertheless under Agency safeguards."¹⁴⁹ Besides that, no clarification has been given by Iran regarding the establishment of the Fordo facility at an existing defense establishment; more information is needed to explain the reason behind building it under mountains.

10. The last IAEA report on 8 November 2011 summarizes the possible military dimensions. "Previous reports have identified outstanding issues related to possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program. Since 2002, the Agency has become increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of undisclosed nuclear related

¹⁴⁸IAEA Board of Governors, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran," 8 November 2011, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2011/gov2011-65.pdf> (accessed 18 May 2012), 5.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile, about which the Agency has regularly received new information. . . . Some activities may still be ongoing. . . . Since August 2008, Iran has not engaged with the Agency in any substantive way on this matter.”¹⁵⁰

11. The missiles program associated with the nuclear program (Solid Propellant Ballistic Missile) confirms the premeditated intention to get a nuclear bomb and the delivery means at the same time. Iran is strongly seeking a missiles program capable of reaching all the capitals of the region as well as to Europe and US military bases in the region. (See the Missiles Capability at figure 3 below).

12. The Iranian Space Agency, military project indicates the future advances in extensive range ballistic missiles as well as space boosters. Some reports mentioned that Iran’s space project is made for spying on the region which jeopardizing the national security.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Hussein Bakir, “Report of the Risks of the growing offensive capabilities of Iran and the strategic balance in the Gulf,” *The Gulf Views Magazine*, no. 63 (December 2009).

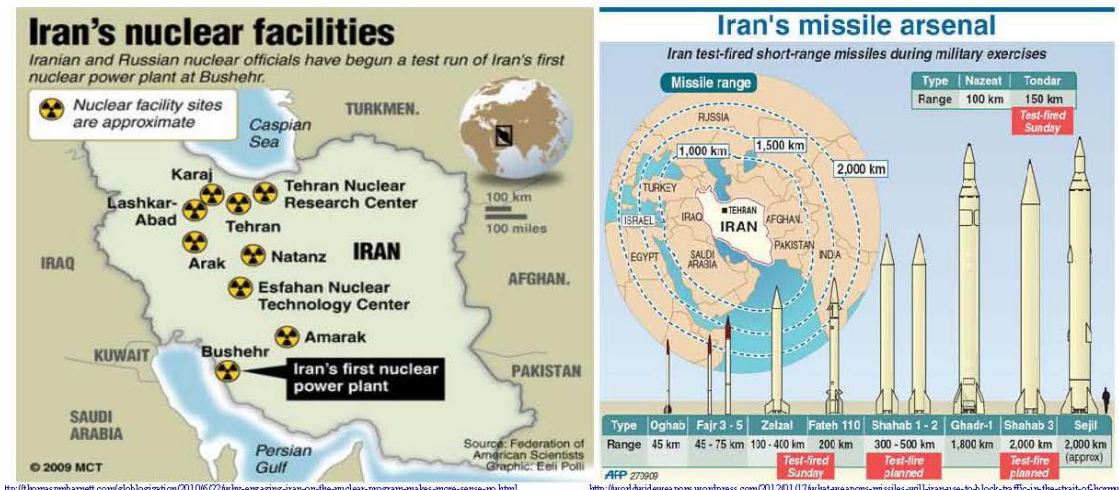


Figure 3. Iranian Nuclear Locations and Missile Capabilities

Source: Thomas P. M. Barnett, “Why engaging Iran on the nuclear program makes more sense now than ever,” Wolostrat, 22 June 2010, <http://thomaspmbarnett.com/globlogization/2010/6/22/why-engaging-iran-on-the-nuclear-program-makes-more-sense-no.html> (accessed 19 May 2012); World Wide Weapons, Weapon Systems Analysis and Discussion Blog, <http://worldwideweapons.wordpress.com/2012/01/17/what-weapons-missiles-will-iran-use-to-block-traffic-in-the-strait-of-hormuz/> (accessed 19 May 2012).

Arab Gulf Instability-Global Energy Stability Strategic Location (Iran and GS States)

Gulf States and Iran have geographically important sites across different historical times Iran represents a bridge between East and West and serves as a natural corridor for world trade between the far East and the Mediterranean basin, as well as Africa. This has given them an opportunity to connect to various states as a dynamic road in imports and exports, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), prompting Iran orientation towards the Arabian Gulf., The presence of oil (Iran 1908) has contributed in promoting Iran’s political niche and the GCC later (1932 to 1963).¹⁵²

¹⁵²The Global Arabic Encyclopedia.

Iran and GCC control a huge amount of oil reserves and production which are about 50 percent of the world's reserve and the highest of OPEC production (see figure 4 below). Furthermore, Iran and the GCC occupy two oil wealthy areas, the Arabian Gulf which critically important because it contains the largest oil and natural gas reserves in the world (see tables 3 and 4 below) and the Caspian, which is economically important, with oil reserves (8 to 16 billion barrels in 2007).¹⁵³

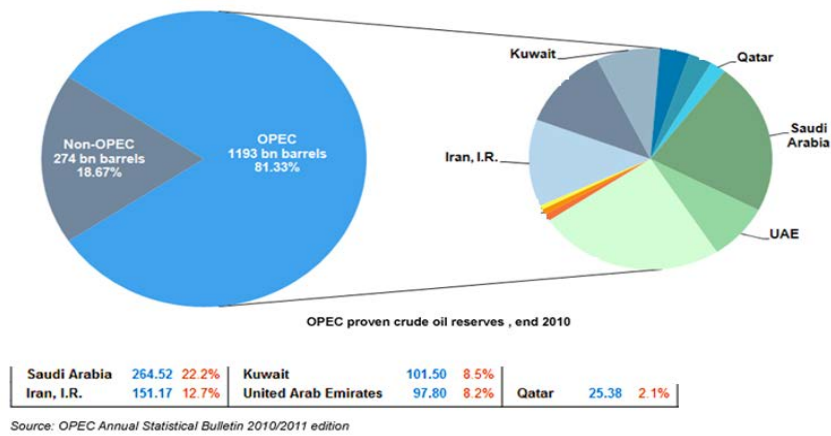


Figure 4. OPEC Share of World Crude Oil Reserves 2010

Source: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), *Annual Statistical Bulletin 2010/2011*, http://www.opec.org/opec_web/static_files_project/media/downloads/publications/ASB2010_2011.pdf (accessed 19 May 2012).

¹⁵³Nuzhet Cem Orekli, "Turkey's Energy Strategy in a New Era: Time to Re-Look South," <http://www.setav.org/ups/dosya/19325.pdf> (accessed 9 May 2012).

Table 3. World Proven Crude Oil Reserves by Country (m b)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% change 10/09
Middle East	754,616	750,619	752,258	752,080	794,266	5.6
IR Iran	138,400	136,150	137,620	137,010	151,170	10.3
Iraq	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	143,100	24.4
Kuwait	101,500	101,500	101,500	101,500	101,500	—
Oman	5,572	5,572	5,572	5,500	5,500	—
Qatar	26,185	25,090	25,405	25,382	25,382	—
Saudi Arabia	264,251	264,209	264,063	264,590	264,516	—
Syrian Arab Republic	3,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	—
United Arab Emirates	97,800	97,800	97,800	97,800	97,800	—
Others	2,908	2,798	2,798	2,798	2,798	—

Source: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), *Annual Statistical Bulletin 2010/2011*, http://www.opec.org/opec_web/static_files_project/media/downloads/publications/ASB2010_2011.pdf (accessed 19 May 2012).

Table 4. World proven natural gas reserves by country
(billion standard cu m)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% change 10/09
Middle East	72,235	73,643	75,289	75,540	78,890	4.4
IR Iran	26,850	28,080	29,610	29,610	33,090	11.8
Iraq	3,170	3,170	3,170	3,170	3,158	−0.4
Kuwait	1,780	1,784	1,784	1,784	1,784	—
Oman	690	690	690	690	610	−11.6
Qatar	25,636	25,636	25,466	25,366	25,201	−0.7
Saudi Arabia	7,154	7,305	7,570	7,920	8,016	1.2
United Arab Emirates	6,040	6,072	6,091	6,091	6,091	—
Others	915	906	908	908	939	3.4

Source: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), *Annual Statistical Bulletin 2010/2011*, http://www.opec.org/opec_web/static_files_project/media/downloads/publications/ASB2010_2011.pdf (accessed 19 May 2012).

These countries gained great importance because of their locations overseeing the Straits of Hormuz and control the Islands in the Gulf. The Strait is one of the most important water crossings globally; “with daily oil flow of almost 17 million barrels in 2011, almost 20 percent of oil traded worldwide.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴US Energy Information Administration, “World Oil Transit Chokepoints,” <http://205.254.135.7/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=WOTC> (accessed 9 May 2012).

Iran's location allows it to strongly supervise the Straits and the Islands in it; affording Iran the luxury to watch and control the military (ships, equipment) and commercial ships entering and exiting from the Arabian Gulf, which is certainly vital to Iranian national security.

Iran's strategic location distinguishes it from other regional States. In the matter of maintaining the security of the Hormuz Strait, Iran has superiority over the northern side of the Gulf as well as the Hormuz Strait and Oman Gulf; also using the Islands near the Strait of Hormuz entrance.¹⁵⁵

Following the emergence of the Soviet Union and the US after the Second World War, Iran and the GSC States became interested among those super powers. Iran's site was critical for the Soviet decision-makers because it bordered the Soviet Union's land and isolated it from the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf.

Soviet decision-makers considered Iran a natural place for expansion and wanted to prevent any hostile maritime powers from controlling it. Iranian and GSC coasts on the Gulf and the Red Sea from the west (Bab el Mandeb, Suez Canal) influence the movement of oil from the productive zones in the Arabian Gulf to the industrially developed States and moving manufactured goods from overflow areas in developed States to deficit areas in the Arab Gulf, and from there to Central Asia and north from this point.

¹⁵⁵Pirouz Mojtahed, Prof Zadeh, Tunb and Abu Musa, *Iran's Quest for Peace and Cooperation in the Gul* (Expected Ilbetaah), 7.

China, the US and the EU Involvements in the Gulf Issues

Russia, China, and U.S feel the importance of the unusual geographical location of Iran to the Arabian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Because of the US movement toward the Gulf, the Caspian Region and Central Asia, with the goal of offsetting Russian influence from the region, NATO began a more active presence in the region in order to support its allies in Turkey and Azerbaijan in the Caspian.

From the other side, the cooperation between Iran and China slows down as US NATO, and EU influence in Central Asia (Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan) increases Iranian trade and oil are very important to China as well.

The geopolitical map is changing because of the US presences in Central Asia, the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and direct intervention in the oil rich Caspian region through the establishment of the Eurasian corridors system between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia, which geopolitically isolates Iran. This situation urges China to search for a foothold in the region in order to bolster its oil and trade lines.

Iran's Relations with the Gulf States

Iran's relations with the Gulf States are different on the tactical level based on the perceptions of Iran by each changing regime. . . . At the strategic level Iran's policy has not changed since the revolution because it relates directly to Khamenei and clergy. Statements coming from Tehran oscillate between threats and can quickly turn to statements of affection, agreement, and even convergence.

Saudi Arabia represents the Western main pole in the Gulf and other Gulf States take the same path as the Saudi Government in order to meet the influence of Iran. Generally, the Gulf diplomacy towards Iran is committed to restraint and media rhetoric

within red lines which does not allow Iran to bypass. Saudi Arabia's role became clear when Iran supported the chaos and launched threats against Bahrain which prompted Saudi Arabia to interfere directly in Bahrain in the full absence of the American guarantor.

The relations are unbalanced between factors such as compatibility, joint economic ventures, and oil export. The existence of Shiite minorities takes into account the different factors such as Iran's occupation of the UAE islands, border disputes with Kuwait, the different religious beliefs, and Iran's creation of networks of espionage in Kuwait and Bahrain, and the use of Shiite traders in the UAE.

The relations relapsed with the advent of President Ahmadinejad, who is considered unable independently to manage Iranian foreign affairs. Iran's nuclear program is fully rejected by the Gulf States and is non-debatable; even if it is presented as a peaceful program due to the risk of radiation leakage from the reactors which are near to the oil fields and refineries on the Gulf banks. Should there be an accidental leakage, it would require an evacuation of the Iranian coast and insurmountable GCS clean-up costs; therefore, stopping the oil production at least for an indefinite period.

Iran's government has tried repeatedly to send its Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Riyadh to discuss bilateral relations and differences between the two countries; however, Saudi Arabia rejected its request each time on the grounds, that the Ahmadinejad government has no saying or control over Iran's foreign affairs and because of the strong

differences between him and the revolution's advisors (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) whom the Saudis consider, the strongest man in the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹⁵⁶

Strategic Analysis (Incidents) within the Gulf Linked to Iran

1. The hostile statements continue between Iran and the Gulf States. General Hassan Virosbadi, Iran's Army Chief and member of Supreme National Security Council, stressed that this region "has always belonged to Iran."¹⁵⁷ With regard to Bahrain, in an article written by Shariat Madari, an adviser to the Supreme Leader, one reads "that it was ceded at the time of the Shah and is not authorized by the Iranian people." In remarks made by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi to the Iranian news channel (Jam Jim): "Iran defends the people of Bahrain and supports their rights."

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2. The use of the Iranian embassies in the Gulf States for espionage and for the recruiting of Shiite agents who go to Iran to study religion continues even today. Kuwait executed Iranian spies and also expelled many Iranian diplomats on more than one occasion. Bahrain and the UAE have done the same. The dissident Iranian Ambassador (Adel Asadi) who resides in exile in Stockholm, Sweden, confirmed it and also

¹⁵⁶Alquds, "The strongest man in the Islamic Republic of Iran," <http://www.alquds.com/news/article/view/id/318239> (accessed 5 May 2012).

¹⁵⁷Al-seyassah, Kuwait, Continues hostile statements, <http://www.al-seyassah.com/AtricleView/tabid/59/smId/438/ArticleID/137595/reftab/70/Default.aspx> (accessed 10 May 2012).

¹⁵⁸Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, "Iran, Bahrain," <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=1&issueno=11913&article=630505&feature=> (accessed 8 May 2012).

confirmed that the Islamic Republic has a “network of agents and sleeper cells in the GCC.”¹⁵⁹

3. Iran has polarized the Gulf Region and has supported those opposing the Gulf countries by providing them with funds and shelters. It has also harbored Al-Qaeda and provided them with funds, training, and equipment. Some Al-Qaeda members admitted to their countries (when they were deported back to their native lands) of involvement with Iran, and of support given to them by those in Tehran. Recently, US forces killed an Al-Qaeda operative (of Libyan descent) who was crossing into Afghanistan from Iran.

4. Iran knows that the Gulf region is a vital artery for energy linked to global interests. Iran has already destroyed world oil tankers transporting Kuwaiti oil (1987) to a point that the oil tankers started requiring protection from the US in order to guarantee safe passage.¹⁶⁰ Iran has confirmed that in the event of an attack because of its nuclear program, they would attack the Gulf States first.

5. The Iranian regime has created movements, organizations and Shiite parties which are linked to Iran financially and ideologically opposed to their adversaries (proxy forces). Such groups include the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (in 1979), which tried to break apart Bahrain—it was linked to Iranian support. Today these movements are elaborated on the Islamic National Accord Association under the leadership of Ali Salman.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹“Iran’s sleeper cells in the GCC,” http://www.alarabiya.net/save_pdf.php?cont_id=32599 (accessed 8 May 2012).

¹⁶⁰Global Security, “Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988),” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm> (accessed 13 May 2012).

¹⁶¹Sadiq, *What Do You Know about Hezbollah*, 38-47.

6. The founding of Hezbollah in Kuwait in the early 1980s was formed by leaders who studied in the Iranian city of Qom. They published magazines and publications through the Islamic Centre for media in Tehran. They also praised the Iraqi Da'wah party's operation to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait (1985) as well as the hijacking of the Kuwaiti airline in 1988; directing it to land at Mashhad Airport in Iraq.¹⁶²

7. The founding organizations in Saudi Arabia, such as the "Organization of the Islamic Revolution in the Arabian Peninsula," and the "International Committee of Human Rights in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula" find their roots in Tehran. In 1987, the founding a military wing called Hejaz Hezbollah, was linked To Iranian intelligence after volatile events during the Hajj (1987).¹⁶³ This party was also behind the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dahrhan.

8. There is a movement afoot in Kuwait to exploit Kuwaiti law following the request of the Shiite minority for the establishment of Shiite *Waqf*; an autonomous entity that is set apart from the Sunni; much like that which was formed in Lebanon (the highest Shiite Council).

9. Iranian Revolutionary Guards use of Najaf airport in Iraq to transport drugs from Iran to Iraq, and then smuggle them into the Gulf States (especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) in order to finance some intelligence and espionage activities while providing hard currency.

10. Iran has manipulated trade ties with Gulf States in order to put pressure on them. The Iranian Minister of Industry and Trade banned all trade ties between his

¹⁶²Ibid., 30-36.

¹⁶³Ibid., 49-50.

country and UAE because of the hostile position that the UAE had toward the Islamic Republic of Iran. An Iranian spokesman later denied cutting ties, and said it was only a warning; noting that the larger damage is on the sanctioned Iranian economy.

11. Iran has been linked to an agreement with Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to send a group of Al-Qaeda to Saudi Arabia in order to assassinate Shiite figures in Riyadh in an effort to instigate sectarian chaos (that group is on trial now).

12. Iran has trained sabotage cells in Saudi Arabia and provoked these groups to riot in the city of Awameih on 4 October 2011. Professor Abdul Aziz bin Saqqar, head of the Gulf Research Center explained that this method applies to Hezbollah's tactic (using motorcycles and throwing Molotov cocktails).¹⁶⁴

13. Iran has the exploited use of the oil fields it shares with Oman (Hen Gam Field) and with Kuwait (Dorrah Field) without going to the Gulf States for permission. The head of the Iranian Oil Company said "Iran indeed launched their development and production. If you reject Iranian diplomacy, Iran is going forward in the development of the field from one side."¹⁶⁵

Ultimately, the Gulf States consider the US withdrawal from Iraq an event that would create a vacuum controlled by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and the Iranian Intelligence. Many in the Gulf believe this will eventually lead to increased Iranian

¹⁶⁴"Qatif's riots is Iranian message to the Gulf States," <http://www.arabnet5.com/news.asp?c=2&id=113337> (accessed 8 May 2012).

¹⁶⁵Lebanese Center for Research and Consulting, "Dorrah oil Field," <http://www.center-lcrc.com/index.php?s=2&ss=news&cat=3&id=5820> (accessed 4 May 2012).

influence in Iraq and bolster initiative for Iran to expand its revolution in the direction of the other Gulf States.

Other Key Actor Responses to Iranian Threats (and its Nuclear Program)

International Sanctions and Iran

It is hard to believe that Iran is the second largest producer in OPEC with huge oil revenues, is suffering an economic crisis, given that there is reasonable economic growth. The Iranian regime and its provocative policies (internally and externally) are considered the reason for the country's worsening economic problems. The Iranian Government puts pressure on its own economy and is not aware that the Iranian economic approach is based on the old ways driven by a radical socialist model where the State dominates all sectors of the economy, leaving little room for growth and opportunity. Tehran needs to raise 100 billion dollars of investments in its oil production capacity in the next decade. One must ask: "How can it come from foreign investments where Iran is locked in battle with the international community because of its nuclear file despite the oil wealth?"

Iran's economy has faced sanctions for about the past 30 years and has been able to manipulate, bend, and open informal channels and fake companies in past years. Iran is headed toward Asia to reduce their dependence on European markets, which now receive less than 18 percent of its oil exports, and has strengthened its relations with countries in South America, and some African States that wish to get cheap goods, financial advantages, and other support. Iran also uses Iraq to deal with the outside world. The Foreign Minister of Iran said that: "Sanctions don't concern us ever. We have taken

precautionary measures. We have escaped the sanctions of the west for the past 32 years and we will also be saved.”¹⁶⁶

Iran first fell under unilateral American sanctions in the mid-1980s. The imposed sanctions were related to terrorism and later added the Iranian-Libyan sanctions to the Penal Code in 1996, along with a decree banning the proliferation of nuclear weapons on Iraq and Iran, as the US imposed sanctions on companies and secondary States hindering investment in Iran’s energy sector.¹⁶⁷ Indeed the US sanctions caused a delay in Iran’s nuclear program. On one hand was the difficulty of importing prohibited technical equipment, and the fear by suppliers of penalties and the increased costs. On the other hand, it caused the burden on the Iranian energy sector because the Iranian Government was unable to modernize it which made Tehran miss out on high investment opportunities. However Iran has used its available resources by “taking advantage of high oil prices” and advanced the nuclear program with the support of powerful States such as Russia and China.

Still, with the movement of the Iranian nuclear issue before the UN Security Council, Iran’s economy has entered a critical stage brought about by the imposed UN sanctions (UNSCR1737 in 2006, UNSCR 1747 in 2007 and UNSCR 1803 in 2008). In 2011, the EU Foreign Ministers added a number of organizations and Iranian persons to restricted lists due to lack of cooperation from Tehran in its nuclear program. At the

¹⁶⁶Iranian Foreign Ministry, “Sanctions don’t concern us, ever,” <http://www.mfa.gov.ir/NewsShow.aspx?id=2562&menu=263&lang=ar> (accessed 3 April 2012).

¹⁶⁷*King Khalid Military College Magazine* no. 97, 6 January 2009.

beginning of 2012, other European sanctions banned oil exports from Iran if Tehran did not pledge to cooperate with the international community.¹⁶⁸

Indeed the three decades of imposed sanctions suspended the evolution of the Iranian economy, particularly the oil and the petrochemicals industry which is the main source of income; however, those harder sanctions on the Central Bank and financial activities will affect the lives of ordinary Iranian citizens for beyond a generation. These recent sanctions will make the Iranian government rearrange its priorities and contemplate providing sources of living for their citizens, otherwise, it will collapse.

There are multiple opinion, Ms. Hala Esfandiari, Director of the Center for Middle East, considers that sanctions has broken the Iranian economy's back, and that people are complaining about the high cost of living. She also believes that sanctions caused a split among the Iranian leadership.¹⁶⁹

On the other hand, Mr. Kareem Sajedbor from the same Center considers that sanctions could be counterproductive as it might push Khamenei to expedite the manufacture of nuclear weapons as a shield against pressures, and recognized what happened to Kaddafi after he renounced weapons of mass destruction and became vulnerable to outside interference.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸National Review, "Game On: EU Bans Iran Oil Imports," <http://www.nationalreview.com/the-feed/288908/game-eu-bans-iran-oil-imports> (accessed 6 May 2012).

¹⁶⁹Amin Tarzi, ed., "The Iranian Puzzle Piece Understanding Iran in the Global Context" (Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA, 2009).

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

Struggle for Power inside Iran

The international community might possibly find a way to intervene more productively in an effort to influence political decisions in Iran if it knew the details of the conflict between the centers of power and the ideological orientations that differ among the influential people. The decision-making process in Iran is divided in two groups, each of which has perceptions which differ on the concept of state and which sometimes lead to conflict. One is the party of Khomeini's followers who guard the system based on the Constitution which gives all powers to the Supreme Leader. The other party is made of reformists (these ideologicals came after Khomeini's death), who are considered the Islamic left camp, and who look to the needs of Iran toward a more open foreign policy in order to end the repression.

Despite the inconsistencies with Khamenei's policies, the two sides still find themselves in apparent agreement on *Walyat-El Faqih*. Their disagreements essentially stem from policies pursued by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who is approved by Khamenei, and thus considered incompatible with the policies of Imam Khamenei. The reformist Khatami describes them as "traditional close-minded and still in the Stone Age."¹⁷¹

With regard to the first party, clearly, it is a group of ultra-radicalists followed by extreme militants within, who are supported by the Revolutionary Guards (who helped modify the election results for Ahmadinejad) based on fatwa (religious opinions) directed by their leader Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi (a hard-line fundamentalist cleric who opposed the election and who is the godfather of Ahmadinejad).

¹⁷¹Iraq, <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=177987> (accessed 1 May 2012).

The radical group, at the time of Ayatollah Khomeini, was prohibited from having a voice in Iranian decision-making. They returned in 1990 and brought with them the current President (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad). In fact, all of the Iranian Intelligence Ministers since the revolution are students of Ayatollah Mesbah. Many senior leaders of the Revolutionary Guards, including the present Revolutionary Guard Commander, Major General Javari, have been strongly influenced by Ayatollah Mesbah and his supporters.

Since he was elected in 2005, President Ahmadinejad has used Ayatollah Mesbah's words in speaking on "the Islamic Government of Iran" rather than "the Islamic Republic of Iran." This explains why the proposed rift between the Iranian President and Supreme Leader was actually a power struggle between Ahmadinejad and religious conservatives in April 2011. Ahmadinejad was embarrassed by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei when he brought back the Minister of Intelligence, who had been released by Ahmadinejad.

There was also bank scandal which was used as a political battleground between Ahmadinejad and his conservative rivals. Authorities have arrested dozens of people involved in the so-called process of large-scale embezzlement which amounted to 2.6 billion (US) dollars. Frequently the opponents of Ahmadinejad accused Esfandiyar Rahim Mashaei (Ahmadinejad's Chief of Staff), of having a close relationship to the suspects.

According to an Iranian newspaper, Ahmadinejad was threatening his rivals by revealing secret documents which exposed 314 senior officials in the fundamentalist government. He told his supporters there were several attempts to assassinate him. Critics of Ahmadinejad said that in the short period where the Intelligence Minister was relieved,

Intelligence officers who were exploited by Ahmadinejad were told to copy large number of secret files of senior officials. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's response was "he wouldn't mind canceling the position of the President."¹⁷²

The power struggle between Iranian mullahs and the government appears to be a struggle between the religious institution in Iran and the political institutions. Even the Revolutionary Guard is semi-divided between the political and religious powers.

The question which lingers is whether war becomes the only option for staying in power? Is the escalation of the Iranian discourse an appropriate setting to prepare the ground for the international community to undertake a military strike against Iran? If so, it will be the means by which one party seeks to eliminate the other party in order to re-consolidate the internal front (in a similar fashion as what happened during the Iraq-Iran war).

¹⁷²“Ahmadinejad was threatening by revealing secret,” <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/14/188299.html> (accessed 8 May 2012).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 1979, the fall of the Shah and the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran brought a new power to the country. This new power raised many questions regarding the character of the state, its role, its objectives, and even its legitimacy. At this time, some strongly condemned this new entity and all that its concepts and trends represented, while others took it upon themselves to promote the new Iranian political system. In the belief that Islamic ideas and political ambitions had been greatly misunderstood, these are the major contradictory opinions on the political behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. With the beginning of the 21st century, the personality of Iran gained importance as it now took on a new role regionally and internationally. This importance is subject to escalation or deflation based on changes in the international arena.

Conclusions

This research discussed the origin of the sources of Iranian nuclear weapons, the facts and assumptions, as well as the various factors, actors in the region, and the involved outsiders.

Dating back more than three thousand years, the Persians have tried to be dominant the power in the Middle East and the vital surrounding areas, and they continue to do so even today. Their power remains despite their inabilities to penetrate the center of the Arabian Peninsula and the ongoing conflicts with the other neighboring great powers. Their history has given the world lessons for both political and military leaders, and still present their ambitions over the energy and trade routes which have always

presented conflicts in the Middle East fueled by many reasons; e religions, ethnic history and outsiders. Thus, the force that controls these elements becomes a regional power with which the world will have to deal.

A brief flashback into the modern history of Iran (since the 1979 Revolution) sets the stage for a summary of the findings already presented in chapter 4. The Iranian Revolution passed through several stages, generally following the key steps of contemporary revolutions. For example, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the Cuban Revolution have had similar stages.¹⁷³

1. It began by restoring the historic article around the 1930s, which was backed by henchman agglomeration, and by internally building ideological and ethnical followers. In addition, it built foreign alliances, created networks with other non-state actors, and finally strengthened the state military while looking for regional leadership.

2. Khomeini directed the first phase-history, religion and ethnicity-Persian. Rafsanjani completed what Khomeini started and supported foreign parties loyal to Iran. Khatami's role was to complete the second phase, which consisted of networking, configuring international support, and setting the stage for the third phase by rebuilding the nuclear program in a matter of human and technical capacities.

3. The last stage emphasized (and continues to emphasize) military strength, resource control and regional leadership, and the current President Ahmadinejad seeks to develop these further through accelerating the nuclear weapons program, strengthening the ballistic missiles and cyber program and increasing the influences of the pro-Iranian actors in the region.

¹⁷³Coville, *Iran, Invisible Revolution*.

The common factor which cuts across all stages was that the successive Iranian Governments benefited from perks provided by their geographical location, available energy resources, and imbalance of power in the region (particularly, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of Iraq, and the support of the ideological groups loyal to Iran with oil money).¹⁷⁴

These continued efforts to obtain conventional and nuclear weapons have ensured the emergence of Iran as a dominant force in the region and as an essential player in the international arena. However, the current sanctions on the Iranian economy, which is tied to oil prices and exports (70 percent Iran budget),¹⁷⁵ has hindered these ambitions and may lead to a stop in Iranian oil exports by 2015.¹⁷⁶ If so, this will be due to a decline in foreign investment, and the increasing domestic consumption. Although the Iranian economy has created numerous ports by which to evade sanctions in the form of fake companies owned by the Shiite people in different countries, it has also relied on the bazaar traders; however, their efforts are not enough to sustain their economy in the long run.¹⁷⁷

When the Iranian theocratic government has a nuclear weapon, they will use it militarily in the first conflict that arises.¹⁷⁸ Much evidence speaks to the fact that the

¹⁷⁴Al zwaiiri Mahjoub, *The Iranian Presence in Iraq: The Facts* (Jordan: University of Jordan, Center for Strategic Studies, 2007).

¹⁷⁵Al Theyabi, *Iran and the Dance of Cancer*.

¹⁷⁶Toukan and Cordesman.

¹⁷⁷“Iranian economy has created numerous ports,” <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/07/199208.html> (accessed 8 May 2012).

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

Iranian military leadership is closely associated with its religious leadership and gives priority to the Supreme Leader over the government and that all of those leaders consider getting a nuclear weapon as a religious duty. The Iranian officials called many times for the conquest of Bahrain, and have threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz more than once without any consideration of the world interests in Hormuz. Every once in a while, the officials call for new world order; one that is absent of the US and Israel. A world which exists from an Iranian point of view would cause war and affect international stability, and global energy.

Iran's leaders have supported terrorist organizations and hostilities in an effort to rebuild the Middle East and the surrounding areas (Caspian, Central Asia) following their extremist view (such examples can be found in , Al-Qaeda, and the Syrian regime). Clearly it is proxy wars provoked and supported by Iran from one side, and by the West and other Arab countries from the other side that have shaped the regional policies to serve its interests and establish a new world order. Iran's possession of nuclear weapons will give it the ability to support these proxy wars militarily, and will add to the robust support it already provides via financing and political support.

In spite of the economic sanctions and political pressures imposed by the international community over the last 30 years, the Iranian theocratic regime continues its hostile actions against the Gulf States and the other Arab countries. The direct destructive interference still continues in Iraq and Afghanistan, which leads to the increased problems of refugees, sectarian violence and direct pressure on the economies of involved countries (GC, US, EU) or indirectly on all oil consumers. This is in contrast to the efforts of the international community, who seek to bring stability and sustainable

development to the region. The global community should condone the regime's claims that these interventions are part of an Iranian defense strategy which are vital for Iranian survivability. The reality is that Iran's interventions in these countries and others are to consolidate its position as an influential actor in the global arena and to be able to impose its conditions on the international community in both regional and international issues.

Historically, Iran intervened in other countries by using conventional military forces to occupy the UAE's Islands, by using terrorist acts against US in Beirut in the 1980s,¹⁷⁹ and by creating the Houthis to blackmail Saudi Arabia.¹⁸⁰ Last but not least, it supported the Syrian regime's plan to kill innocent peoples. The use of force and terrorism, such as these occurrences and others which it has instigated, occurred during the periods where Iran was not even close to acquiring nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons will encourage Iran to expand those efforts without deterrence, which would cause irreparable damage.

Historical precedents have been set by other countries; for example, ballistic missile programs, space programs and military explosive research programs are eventually used as apparatuses of domination and tools of terror and extortion. A lot of missiles have already been delivered to Hezbollah, which used them in the 2006 war with Israel.¹⁸¹ Also, the Improvised Explosive Device technology was transferred to militant

¹⁷⁹Aljazeera.net, "Beirut in the 1980s," <http://aljazeera.net/home/print/0353e88a-286d-4266-82c6-6094179ea26d/945070ec-f5b4-4f5b-b2dc-0799dd7d6525> (accessed 9 May 2012).

¹⁸⁰"Creating the Houthis," <http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/11/14/91194.html> (accessed 14 May 2012).

¹⁸¹http://www.alarabiya.net/save_pdf.php?cont_id=187813 (accessed 9 May 2012).

organizations in Iraq and Afghanistan to be used against the US and its allies. Currently, the Iranian drone is flying in the Syrian sky to spy on the rebels.¹⁸² Along with these direct actions have been many indirect hostilities as well, such as the radical organizations training and their involvement with criminal activity (such as the assassination of the Saudi ambassador in US and the smuggling of drugs). Finally, the military and guerilla activities in Caucasus region are also threats. All of these pieces fit together to create a picture of a large problem that proves Iran is a threat to the international security.

A nuclear weapons capability would significantly increase the ability of Iran's theocratic regime to launch conventional missiles on the oil facilities in the Gulf. It would also give a strong position to the Iranian military in the case of a naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's geographical location, plus its nuclear ability would increase the conventional threat to Caspian oil production. This would allow Iran to blackmail the entire world by controlling the most important energy resources supported by the sale of proliferation of conventional weapons to non-state actors and terrorist groups. Furthermore, the nuclear ability coupled with radical views, increases the possibility of missiles strikes against US forces in region and Israel as well. Undoubtedly, this would ignite a war that definitely will affect the Gulf States in many aspects; militarily, as a Theater of War, and economically, by stopping oil production and exports which consequently would affect the global economy.

¹⁸²Aljazeera.net, "Iranian drone in Syria," <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/d4b81219-f9e8-49b7-bb28-5abec320d6c9> (accessed 9 May 2012).

In conclusion, if Iran obtained nuclear weapons it would cause a power imbalance in the Middle East and then lead to a conventional and nonconventional weapons race in the region, or force the US and others to extend their nuclear umbrellas going back to the Cold War era. Nuclear weapons would also allow Iran to control and influence the global energy supply in the Gulf Region and Central Asia; a course of action which would never be accepted by regional powers and would lead to destructive consequences.

Recommendations for Action

It is wrong to say that Iran's foreign policy has changed at the strategic level to a better policy after Khomeini died in 1989; rather, the change was at the tactical level where its goals have fluctuated while its strategic objectives remained fixed. If Iran continues to work effectively on their nuclear weapons program, this would increase the probability of destabilizing the region and threaten the production and distribution of global energy as well as its security. These actions are not simply opposing GCS interests, but are opposing to interests of all every country around the world who need energy and who wish to have peace.

The researcher offers the following recommendations in order to minimize the Iranian threats:

First, the international community should continue to tighten economic sanction policies until Iran verifies its nuclear efforts and intentions and opens its nuclear facilities to the IAEA under the requirements of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, which was signed by Iran and which still has the right to peaceful nuclear activities. The international sanctions have led to a decline of Iran's oil industry, which has resulted in

high inflation and unemployment across all of Iran's sectors. . . . Continuing sanctions might force the government to change its hostile policies.

Second, the international community should adopt a policy of political isolation and strengthen their cohesion against Iran's hard-line policies towards its neighbors in the Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. They should pursue diplomatic contacts with regional countries that are not aligned with Iran in order to expand their spheres of influence.

Third, the international community should support the current Persian opposition to Iran; for example, the Mujahideen Khalq. It is clear that the Iranian regime fears its opposition since the Mujahideen Khalq has revealed some Iran's nuclear sites to the outside world. Direct support organizations like the Mujahideen Khalq would enhance their ability to force the Iranian regime to accept the change from inside. Furthermore, international support the other movements in Luristan, Arabistan, Bloshstan, and in the Azeri areas in northern Iran, make the regime very busy and force it to have to deal with its own domestic issues.

Fourth, the international community should enforce efforts to make the Middle East a nuclear weapons-free zone. Since 1974, the UN (through the IAEA) adopted this project.¹⁸³ The following countries signed Nuclear Proliferation Treaty: Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iran, and the GCC.¹⁸⁴ Israel is exempt from this initiative, which gives Iran possible justification to develop weapons. To resolve the crisis, negotiations should be

¹⁸³Monterey Institute of International Studies, "Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and the Middle East: A Report of the Monterey Nonproliferation Strategy Group, August 2009," http://cns.miis.edu/mnsg/pdfs/0908_mnsg_mideast_nwfs.pdf (accessed 9 May 2012).

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

reopened with all countries in the zone. This would allow the region to deal with Iran, as well as Israel, through peaceful means. The agreement needs to be solidified with guarantee from the international community that ensures the Middle East remains nuclear weapon free.

Fifth, the GCC should identify and use alternatives to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. Recently Iran has threatened to close it, which concerns oil consumers the world over. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz is a major exporting obstacle, and the GCS did find a solution in the past during the Iran-Iraq War. Saudi Arabia established oil pipelines from the Gulf coast to the Red Sea and pumped the oil of Saudi, Kuwait, and Iraq. Also, the UAE established a pipeline directly to the Gulf of Oman; however, the GCS did not improve the capacity of these lines or the ports of exportation. The GCS must work to avoid this threat in the long run by improving the pipelines' capacities and their networks between countries and then, find outside storages.

Sixth, the GCC should become the Gulf Union Council. The Gulf Union Council was the idea of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, at the GCC leaders' summit held in Riyadh in December 2011,¹⁸⁵ due to the change of the international rules and the regional powers ambitions, the change is necessary. The GCC is similar to the Gulf Union Council both socially and culturally, so the majority is looking forward to the Union because it would unify the Gulf lands politically. The GCC's success was limited to the severe political occurrences such as intervention in Kuwait in 1990, and Bahrain in 2011; however, they still have less than half the people's aspirations in the 21 century. From

¹⁸⁵<http://www.gcc-sg.org/indexdfbf.html?action=News>.

here the GCC must consider the union in order to preserve and protect the collective wealth of the region.

Finally, and the most difficult one to face, however necessary it may be, is to ensure that further damage is not done in the long run. If all previous recommendations fail, the UNSC should launch a series of strategic attacks against suspected nuclear sites in order to emphasize the importance of ensuring the Middle East remains a nuclear free zone. Military strikes will not bring an end to Iran's nuclear weapons program; however, it should pressure Iran into talks to give up their nuclear programs. I

It is clear that the Middle East in the beginning of this century differs from what it was at the end of the last one. For example, the gradual disappearance of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Arab Spring atmosphere, and the clear willingness of the US to militarily intervene in the region in order to ensure access to energy resources and to support its allies in the region; these actions were countered by the support which Russia, China, and some emerging powers gave to Iran and its allies (Syria) as they attempted to gain access to these resources and open water.

In addition to these situations, the spread of liberal political movements in many parts of the world, and the information revolution, which does not exclude any regional States (Arab Spring and the resistance movements in Iran). A dramatic change will certainly occur in Iran and its neighboring countries with regard to the general concepts of security for regional states and global energy.

Further research needs be done to discuss associated issues which affect GCC security and also global energy. First, in-depth environmental studies should be done to

assess the impacts of the Bushehr nuclear reactor in the Gulf.¹⁸⁶ Bushehr is located on a fault line, which could lead to an interruption of the reactor's cooling water.¹⁸⁷

Second, research should be done to study the possibility of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt joining the nuclear club if Iran becomes a nuclear power.

Third, research needs to be done on the topic of a joint security formula, which should answer how to ensure no nuclear or conventional threat happens in this vital region and how the international community can guarantee this security formula.

Fourth, a study should be conducted on the impact of the Arab Spring on Iran and its allies in the Shiite Crescent (Iraq-Syria). What will the new Iranian role in the region look like, with the rise of new Arab governments-new strategic alliances?

The middle of this century will likely bring decisive and important implications to the Middle East, and the world must engage it now in order to see that it remains peaceful and prosperous.

¹⁸⁶Bushehr is 50 km to Kuwait, 200 km to Saudi Arabia, 300 to UAE.

¹⁸⁷El-balad, GCC Environmental Committee, <http://www.el-balad.com/57365/lgnh-khlygyh-lmoaghh-alm.aspx> (accessed 6 May 2012).

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